ELLERY QUEEN

THE WORLD'S LEADING MYSTERY MAGAZINE

October 1983
$1.75

Stanley Ellin
Simon Brett
Joe Gores
Joseph Hansen
Edward D. Hoch
and others

including
excerpts from
David W. Rintels' play
CLARENCE DARROW
based on
CLARENCE DARROW FOR THE DEFENSE
by Irving Stone

0 02057 10
387166

ISFDB.ORG.NZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MURDER

THE AGATHA CHRISTIE WAY

At last, the best-selling mystery novels of all time
are now available in an exclusive hardcover collection

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Satisfy your taste for tantalizing murder mysteries as only the great Agatha Christie could write them. Now, enjoy all the classic crime-detection cases of the world's best-selling novelist in an exclusive, new hardbound collection. Each unique Christie novel is individually bound in the distinctive Sussex-blue Devonshire Edition, with all the hallmarks of fine, library-quality book craftsmanship. A delight to look at, touch, read and enjoy!

Follow Dame Agatha's amazing sleuths, the dapper Belgian detective Hercule Poirot and the disarming English spinster Miss Jane Marple, as they unravel intricate plots of diabolical cunning. On luxury trains crossing the continent or slow steamers cruising the Nile, in sedate English country homes or on isolated off-shore estates, Agatha Christie creates a world of bizarre deaths, unexpected murderers and surprising solutions. And no one has ever done it better!

Enrich your home with the ultimate mystery collection. Agatha Christie is renowned the world over for her brilliant plots. Now, the Queen of Crime is immortalized in this beautiful collection of her complete works. It's a collection you'll be proud to display in your library. Created to last for generations, each handsomely crafted book reflects on your good taste.

Discover another deadly delight in your mailbox every month. Acquire your Agatha Christie editions, one a month, beginning with the world-famous *Murder on the Orient Express*. This classic "closed-compartment" mystery puzzle eventually yields its bizarre solution under the clever handling of Hercule Poirot. In the months to come, you'll enjoy other, equally famous Christie novels.

Examine each fascinating volume for 10 days FREE. You may examine each book in the Collection in your home for 10 days without obligation to buy. If you decide to keep *Murder on the Orient Express*, you'll pay just $9.95 plus postage and handling. Each subsequent volume will be sent to you on the same free-examination basis. There's no minimum number of books to buy, and you may cancel at any time. Begin your enjoyment of "Murder: the Agatha Christie way" by mailing the attached coupon today!

Preview each book for 10 days FREE!

75010

☐ YES, please send me *Murder on the Orient Express* for a 10-day free examination and enter my subscription to THE AGATHA CHRISTIE MYSTERY COLLECTION. If I keep this first volume, I will pay just $9.95 plus postage and handling. Each month, I will receive another Christie mystery on the same fully refundable, 10-day, free-examination basis. I understand there is no minimum number of books to buy, and I may cancel my subscription at any time.

Name
PLEASE PRINT

City State Zip

SEND NO MONEY — MAIL THIS COUPON TODAY

MAIL TO: THE AGATHA CHRISTIE MYSTERY COLLECTION
Bantam Books
P.O. Box 957 •
Hicksville, N.Y. 11802

3CA01

LICENSED TO UMI-ORD
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE WORLD'S LEADING MYSTERY MAGAZINE

ELLERY QUEEN®

6 **The Theft of the Halloween Pumpkin** / Edward D. Hoch
20 **Locked Doors** / Lilly Carlson
30 **Older Than the Rocks** / Gwendoline Butler
44 **I Could Kill You** / Richard Roesberg
48 **The Phantom Haircut** / James Powell
63 **The State of the Art** / A. Heyst
72 **Clarence Darrow** / David W. Rintels
96 **Mourner** / Joseph Hansen
105 **How's Your Mother?** / Simon Brett
120 **Watch Yourself At All Times** / Clements Jordan
124 **Raptor** / Joe Gores
137 **Mrs. Mouse** / Stanley Ellin

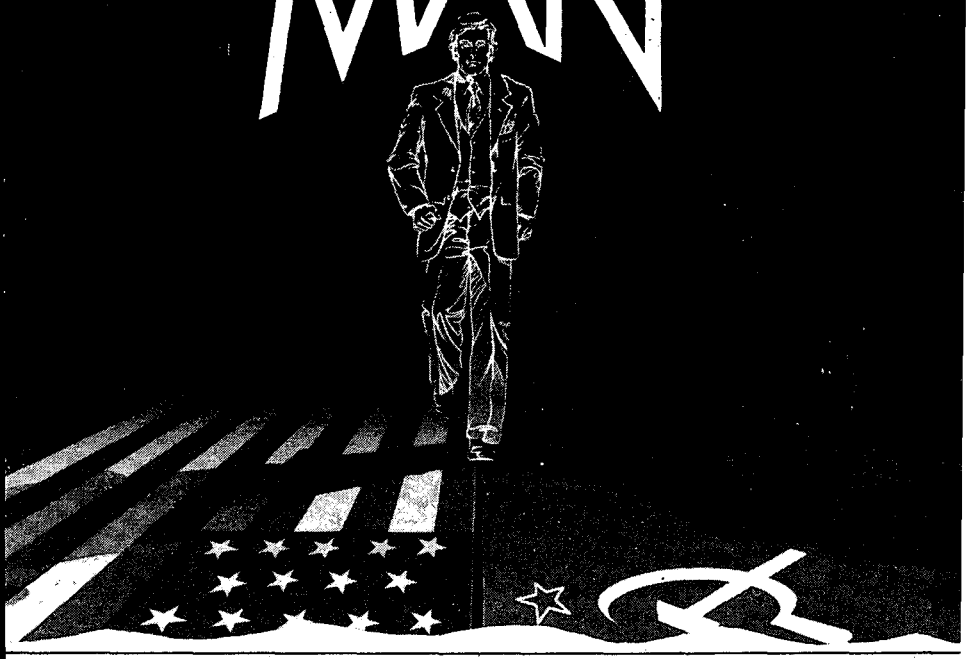
86 **Mystery Newsletter** / R. E. Porter & Chris Steinbrunner
92 **The Jury Box** / Jon L. Breen

Note: indicia on page 95

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JONATHAN EVANS

THE SOLITARY MAN



"A fascinating book." —Len Deighton

"THE SOLITARY MAN... like being on a roller coaster of terror and suspense. My hat's off to Jonathan. A marvelous book—I want to see more of him." —Sean Flannery

"Riveting... THE SOLITARY MAN is a wonderful read, on a par with the best of John le Carre and the thoughtful thrillers of Graham Greene." —Cleveland Plain Dealer

ISBN 812-50-279-5 $3.95 448 PAGES OCTOBER
CANADIAN EDITION ISBN 812-50-280-9 $4.50

TOR BOOKS We're Part of the Future

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* Nick Velvet story by

EDWARD D. HOCH

Back in Acapulco, Rita Spangles lit a cigarette and studied the two plastic pumpkins on the table. "Don't think I'm paying you fifty *thousand just because you stole* two *of them," she said.*

"The second one's on me," Nick told her generously . . .

THE THEFT OF THE HALLOWEEN PUMPKIN

by EDWARD D. HOCH

Nick Velvet first saw the big multicolored hot-air balloons at an autumn rally on a farm in upstate New York one pleasant weekend when he and Gloria were driving aimlessly through the countryside.

"Oh, *look,* Nicky! Let's stop!" she cried—and since he was at least as interested as she was he pulled off the road into a field where other cars were parked.

There were about a dozen of the big balloons in all, crowded onto a farmer's field and looking a bit like some weird October crop come suddenly to maturity. Nick and Gloria walked among them, watching preparations for what was to be a cross-country balloon race. "Could *you* go up in one of those things?" Gloria asked.

"If I had to," Nick decided, viewing the gradually inflating balloons a bit uncertainly.

"They're perfectly safe," a freckle-faced young man assured them, overhearing their conversation. "Man has been flying in hot-air balloons for two hundred years."

"Is this one yours?" Nick asked.

"I don't own it but I fly it." He held out his hand. "My name's

© 1983 by Edward D. Hoch.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Roger Enfield." His red hair and a thin red mustache went well with the freckles. Nick guessed he was still in his early twenties.

He introduced himself and Gloria and Nick shook the young man's hand. "Where are you racing to today?"

"Where the wind takes us," Enfield answered with a laugh. "But we hope to head southeast across the Hudson and come down in Dutchess County."

"Can't you steer these things?"

"Oh, a little. You can go up and down by turning the burner on and off, regulating the amount of heated air in the balloon. Sometimes you can catch a stream of faster air aloft that's going in your direction. And we can always drop ballast if we have to. But a lot depends on the wind."

"Ready to go, Roger?" a tall man asked, striding through the crowd like an officer inspecting his troops. He wore riding boots and a tan-leather jacket reminiscent of the sort pilots wore during the barnstorming Twenties.

"Yes, Mr. Melrose," Enfield replied, and both of them climbed into the little gondola beneath the candy-striped balloon.

"That's Horace Melrose, the publisher," Gloria whispered. "I read somewhere that he's a nut about ballooning."

Melrose was snapping out commands as the ground crew released the ropes holding the balloon in place. Gradually it began to rise, clearing the trees and hovering for a moment as if seeking its way. Then a draft of air took it and it began drifting southeast toward the river.

"It looks like he's right on course," Gloria remarked as they strolled back to the car.

That was the first weekend in October, and Nick thought no more about Melrose, Enfield, and the balloon rally until three weeks later when he was far away, sunning himself on the beach of an expensive Acapulco resort. It was a nice place to visit in late October when the weather around New York began to turn damp and rainy, but Nick wouldn't have chosen it on his own without the urging of his latest client, who gave her name on the telephone as Rita Spangles.

"I can't come up there," she'd informed him. "And I can't do business over the telephone. Fly down here for a couple of days and I'll pay your expenses, in addition to your regular fee."

"All right," he'd agreed. "I'll phone you when I get in."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"No. Be on the beach the day after tomorrow. Have you got a bathing suit?"

"Yes."

"What color?"

"You get your choice of black or red trunks. Like a roulette wheel."

She laughed. "Wear the red. I always win on red."

"What will you be wearing?"

"A white maillot. I'll look for you around one o'clock."

So there he was, a half hour early, basking in the sun with a copy of yesterday's *New York Times*, looking, he hoped, like a typical businessman on vacation. Then he saw her, a few minutes before the appointed hour, strolling across the sand in her white one-piece bathing suit, carrying a striped beach jacket over one shoulder.

He tried not to look up too obviously as she passed, and she paused at his feet to ask, "Velvet?"

"Hello there," he said, glancing up with a smile. "Join me on my blanket?"

She sank down beside him. "From what people told me about you, I expected a younger man."

"Don't let the grey hairs fool you. I'm in disguise."

"I see." She picked up a handful of sand. "You steal things, right?"

"Right. Nothing of value. No money, art works, or securities. Worthless stuff only. My fee's twenty-five thousand."

"I know all that. Would you steal a pumpkin?"

"What kind of a pumpkin?"

"A Halloween pumpkin. A jack-o-lantern. Next Sunday's Halloween."

"So it is. Where will the pumpkin be? In a store? In a farmer's field?"

"On the front porch of a friend of mine."

Nick rolled over on his stomach. "Miss Spangles, pardon me for mentioning it, but you could hire a couple of neighborhood kids to steal a pumpkin off somebody's front porch. They'd probably do it for a couple of candy bars."

"Not from this porch, they wouldn't. It's on an estate that's surrounded by a wall and has guards and dogs patrolling the grounds."

"Then why do they bother with a pumpkin if they don't encourage visitors?"

"A family custom. I think it's his wife's idea."

"Where is this place?"

She'd uncapped a plastic bottle and was spreading suntan lotion

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

carefully along her firm thighs. Her hair was blonde and her complexion fair. She probably burned easily. "Dutchess County, north of New York. Do you know the area?"

"Sure."

"He's a publisher, name of Horace Melrose. He owns a chain of newspapers in cities around the country."

"I've met him briefly," Nick said.

"Can you do it? Steal the pumpkin from his porch on Halloween night?"

"It sounds easy enough. What's your connection with Melrose?"

"We were friends—" she began, and then corrected herself. "Hell, I was his mistress for eight years. Now I'm in exile down here. He pays the bills as long as I stay away."

"And the pumpkin?"

"That's a personal matter. You don't need to know any more."

"You want me to steal it as a sign? To remind him you're still around?"

"Something like that." She looked away, out to sea. "Just bring me the pumpkin."

"Is it a real one, or—"

"I know they use the same decorations every year, and then store them away. It's probably plastic or something." She reached into the drawstring bag she carried with her. "Here's a check for your travel expenses. You'll get your fee when you deliver."

Nick Velvet nodded. She was the sort of woman he liked to deal with, and not just because of the way she looked in a bathing suit. "You'll have it the day after Halloween," he assured her.

Roger Enfield was having a beer in a Poughkeepsie bar when Nick found him. It took a moment for recognition to dawn. "Sure, I remember you. At the balloon race. You had a nice-looking woman."

"Gloria will be happy to hear that," Nick murmured, signaling the bartender. "Who won the race?"

"Fella from New Mexico. Hot-air balloons are a big thing down there. They have races all the time."

"You work for Horace Melrose?"

"Hell, no! He acts like I do sometimes, though. For the races he hires the balloon *and* me from the promotion company I work for."

"Then your balloon's for hire?" Nick said with interest, ordering a beer for himself.

"Sure. What'd you have in mind?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"A sort of promotion. On Halloween night."

"I don't take it up after dark. It's too easy to get tangled in power lines."

"Late afternoon, then. Just before dark." Nick hoped the pumpkin would be out on the porch then. It was a chance he'd have to take. "I'd want to go up, touch down at a certain spot, and then go up again. Could you do that?"

"Sure, if the weather cooperates. I don't go up if it's rainy or windy."

"The pay would be good," Nick assured him. "I'd want you to land on the Melrose property."

"What—on Halloween?" Enfield's voice rose in alarm. "Not a chance, mister! Not after what happened there last year!"

"Oh? I wasn't aware anything happened there last year. Why don't we move over to a booth and you can tell me about it."

Enfield wiped the foam from his red mustache and picked up his half finished beer. "Sure, I'll tell you. It's no secret. It was in all the papers." They settled down in one of the wooden booths where there was more privacy and Nick ordered another round of beers.

The story Enfield told him was simple enough. On Halloween of the previous year, a man had been shot on Melrose property near the front porch of the house. A security guard had mistaken him for a prowler, and when the man started running the guard had fired. The man's name was Tom Reynolds and he was a sportswriter for a Philadelphia newspaper. He'd died at the hospital a few hours later. No one ever established what he was doing on the Melrose property.

"So you see what I mean about Halloween," Roger Enfield said. "If I landed that balloon there Sunday night, the guards would probably pump it full of holes."

"What's Melrose got to hide?" Nick wondered.

"Nothing. He just likes his privacy. He told me once he's around so many people every day he likes to get away from them on weekends."

Nick was struck by a thought. "He's a newspaper publisher. Did this man Reynolds work for him?"

"No. Melrose doesn't own any big-city papers. They didn't even know each other. That's why no one could figure out what Reynolds was doing there."

"Did the police bring charges against anyone?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Enfield shook his head. "The Melroses are pretty important people up here. And Reynolds was trespassing, after all."

Rita Spangles had mentioned a wife. "What about Mrs. Melrose?"

"Jenny? She's a fine woman—very involved with social issues. She serves on a lot of committees."

Nick finished his beer. "Are you sure you won't change your mind about the balloon?"

"On Halloween? Not a chance! Take my advice. If you don't want to get shot, stay away from the Melrose place. If anything, those guards are more trigger-happy now than they were a year ago."

Until then, it had seemed like a simple and uncomplicated assignment. In fact, it had seemed so simple that Nick had dreamed up the balloon landing to spice it up a bit. The idea of using a hot-air balloon to steal a pumpkin and then escaping the same way appealed to his sense of the dramatic. If it couldn't be done, there were plenty of other ways to accomplish the theft. But the news about the man named Tom Reynolds being shot and killed there the previous Halloween bothered him. What if Rita Spangles had hired Reynolds to steal the plastic pumpkin, too? What if the whole thing was some sort of bizarre ritual to lure someone to his death each Halloween?

Later when he told Gloria of this idea, she scoffed. "Honestly, Nicky, you get the craziest ideas sometimes! You should be writing these horror movies the kids like so much. You could call this one *Halloween 4½* or something."

"I suppose I did let my imagination go too far," he admitted. "But Tom Reynolds is dead, there's no denying that. And he was trespassing on their property, the same as I'll be doing."

"Can't you find out if there was any connection between Reynolds and this woman who hired you?"

It was a good suggestion and he wondered why he hadn't thought of it. "I've only got a few days but maybe I can find out something," he decided.

The following morning Nick was in Philadelphia, calling on Tom Reynolds' former editor at the newspaper office on Market Street. The editor's name was Paul Karoski, and his thin hair and pale skin indicated that his was a sporting life spent mainly indoors.

"Reynolds was one of the best young sportswriters I had," he told Nick. "It was a shame what happened to him."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Exactly what did happen?"

"He was onto a story of some sort. He never did tell me what it was. It brought him to the Melrose estate for some reason and he got himself shot. That's about all I know."

"The story must have been involved with sports somehow," Nick reasoned.

"Sure. Football, I think, because for a couple of days before he died he kept replaying a videotape from the Eagles-Rams game of a few weeks earlier. I even looked at it myself after the shooting, but I couldn't see anything unusual on it."

"Do you still have that tape?" Nick asked.

Karoski thought about it. Then he got up and shuffled through a stack of videotapes on top of a filing cabinet. "Maybe I erased—no, here it is. Eagles-Rams, from last October."

"Could I borrow it?"

The sports editor frowned at Nick. "What's your connection with all this? Are you a detective or something?"

"An investigator. I'm working on another matter and someone suggested I look into Tom Reynolds' death."

"All right," Karoski decided. "Take the tape, but bring it back. Give me a receipt for it."

"Gladly." Nick slipped the video cassette into the briefcase he'd brought along and reached for a pen. "One other thing. Did you or Reynolds know a woman named Rita Spangles?"

Karoski thought about it. "I don't, but I had no way of knowing all Tom's friends. He was a good-looking fellow, unmarried—Hold on. Wait a minute. Rita Spangles—I think that was the name of the woman at the hospital."

"What woman?"

"After he was shot, Reynolds lived about five hours. The hospital phoned me because they found his press card on him. I drove right up there, but he was dead by the time I reached the hospital. It was about a three-hour drive. They told me the only person he'd seen was this woman, and I think her name was Rita Spangles. I saw her only briefly, as she was leaving the hospital. I figured it was one of his girl friends."

"Did she seem upset by his death?"

"Yes. But she didn't talk to me."

"I'll get this tape back to you," Nick promised, giving Karoski his asked-for receipt as he left.

That evening he played it on their machine at home. Gloria looked

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in from the kitchen and sighed. "Don't we get enough football on Sundays and Monday nights?"

"This is work. It's a tape Reynolds was studying before he was killed."

"It looks like any other football game to me," Gloria said after watching it a while.

"That's the trouble," Nick agreed. He sat through the entire game—nearly three hours of it—without seeing anything unusual. It was just like any other football game.

On Friday night he looked for and found Roger Enfield in the same bar. "Are you back with your balloon plan?" the young man asked.

"A new one this time. You don't have to take me up, and you don't have to land the balloon. But could you fly over the Melrose place Sunday evening, just before dark?"

Enfield thought about it. "Daylight Savings Time ends Saturday. It'll be dark a little after five o'clock on Sunday."

"All right—around that time, then."

"Where'll you be?"

Nick took some money from his wallet and slid it across the table. "I'll be around. You just come in low and attract lots of attention."

The following morning Nick drove up to the Melrose place, stopping along the way to phone Jenny Melrose for an appointment. He represented himself as a free-lance writer wanting to interview her for an article he was preparing on gracious living in the Hudson Valley. He suspected that would perk her interest and it did.

She was a pleasant woman in her late thirties, a bit younger than her husband but with the same commanding personality. The sunny living room in which she greeted him had been decorated in expensive good taste—a bit old-fashioned by Nick's standards but still attractive. "Where will your article appear, Mr. Nicholas?" she asked, arranging herself on the sofa opposite him.

"I'm hoping for *The New York Times Magazine*, or perhaps *Country Gentleman*."

"I see."

"Could you tell me a bit about your style of living here?" Nick asked. "How you celebrate holidays, Halloween, for instance, since it's coming up tomorrow. Do you get any trick-or-treaters here?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Heavens, no. The gate is closed and there are guards. My husband is very security-conscious."

"How about decorations? Do you do anything special?"

"For Halloween?" She smiled at his question, perhaps at the absurdity of it. "No, no special decorations."

Nick pursued doggedly, "Not even a pumpkin?"

"Oh, we put a couple out on the porch with candles in them. They can be seen from the road. But that's as far as we go."

"I'd like to get a picture of those if I could."

She spread her hands helplessly. "I don't even know where they're stored. I must remember to have one of the servants get them out tomorrow."

"Perhaps I could come back then. The front of your house is so lovely it would make a very effective picture in my story."

"I'm afraid tomorrow wouldn't be convenient."

"I wouldn't have to disturb you. You could just leave word at the gate that I'm expected. One of your security men can stay with me while I snap a photograph of the house on Halloween evening."

"Very well," she agreed. "I suppose there's no harm in that."

Nick forced himself to remain for another forty-five minutes, pursuing his line of questioning about holiday celebrations. Then he departed, confident that he had prepared the way. She had surprised him when she mentioned two pumpkins, but that wouldn't stop him. He'd steal them both.

Halloween proved to be a crisp autumn day in Dutchess County, with the last of the leaves drifting down through sunlit skies. Wearing a black turtleneck sweater and slacks, Nick arrived back at the Melrose estate a little after four o'clock, let himself in the chained entranceway, and drove up the curving driveway. He was just taking a camera from his car when Horace Melrose, coming around from the side of the house, accosted him.

"What are you doing here?" the publisher asked.

"Nicholas is the name," Nick said, extending his hand. "I had a most informative interview with Mrs. Melrose yesterday and she gave me permission to return today for some pictures of the outside of the house."

Melrose ignored Nick's hand. "There's supposed to be a security guard with you. We've had trouble before with reporters."

"I'm not a reporter, Mr. Melrose. I'm a free-lance writer doing a magazine article."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Nevertheless, no one's allowed on these grounds unaccompanied." He walked quickly down the drive to speak some brief harsh words to the security guard on duty. The man came hurrying up to Nick.

"Get your pictures and be on your way, mister," he growled.

"The lighting has got to be right," Nick answered, looking at the sky. Enfield's balloon was due any minute.

As Nick fussed with the camera, Jenny Melrose appeared in the doorway with two large glowing plastic pumpkins. "Here they are," she announced. "I'm sorry to have kept you waiting." She placed one on either side of the wide steps and inspected the scene with a critical eye. "Can you get them both in the photo?"

"I think so," Nick said, looking through the viewfinder and taking a step backward, thinking ironically that the pumpkins were reasonable copies of the real thing and would actually photograph very well. "Let me just move them slightly," he said, noticing that Horace Melrose was no longer on the scene and the guard was taking only a casual interest in the proceedings. He lifted the nearer pumpkin, careful not to disturb the flickering candle inside. There seemed nothing unusual about it to make it valuable to Rita Spangles or anyone else. A grease-penciled number on the bottom—274—seemed to indicate what its price had been.

"What's that?" the guard said, pointing at the sky.

"It looks like Roger Enfield's balloon," Jenny Melrose said. She and the guard moved out beyond Nick's car for a better view. "I wonder what he's doing up so late in the afternoon."

Nick had a look at the second pumpkin by then, but there was no price marked on it. While Mrs. Melrose and the guard watched the descending balloon, he blew out both candles and tossed the pumpkins through the open window of his car.

"I think he's trying to land," the guard said, unsnapping the holster at his side.

The big striped balloon, settling toward the front lawn of the Melrose estate, did indeed look as if it might land. Nick climbed quickly into his car. "Thanks a lot," he called out to Jenny Melrose, "I've got my pictures!"

"What?" She turned, startled. "Already?"

Nick was already wheeling the car around the circular driveway. He heard her say something about the pumpkins, and then the guard shouted at him, but he kept going.

His car hit the slender chain across the gate and snapped it like a string. He saw a little puff of white in the rearview mirror and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thought he heard the bark of the guard's gun fired after him. Overhead, Roger Enfield's balloon lifted high into the twilight sky, out of harm's way.

"What did *you* do for Halloween?" Nick asked Rita Spangles the following day, gazing out of her hotel-room window at the golden sand of the Acapulco beach.

"Trick or treat, like everyone else," she answered. "The treat was a bottle of French champagne in a nice man's room." She lit a cigarette and studied the two plastic pumpkins on the table in front of her. "Don't think I'm paying you *fifty* thousand just because you stole *two* of them."

"The second one's on me," Nick said generously. "I didn't know which one you needed."

She continued staring at them. "To tell you the truth, I don't either. How come the heat from the candle doesn't melt the plastic?"

"They make it with a high melting point for uses like this."

"You think there's something inside the candles?"

Nick shook his head. "I checked on that. They're solid. Look, maybe I can help with your problem if you tell me about it."

"Is that included in your fee?"

"Sometimes."

"All right," she agreed with a sigh, sitting on the edge of the bed. "As you know, I was Horace's mistress. I still am, I suppose, though I haven't seen him in a long time. Just over a year ago, this reporter named Tom Reynolds, a sportswriter and photo editor for a Philadelphia paper, started nosing around. That's when Horace sent me out of town. Reynolds tracked me to Florida and started asking questions."

"What sort of questions?"

"Horace's firm wanted to buy a paper in the Midwest and someone out there tried to block the sale by claiming he had links to organized crime. They said he was a business associate of Norman Elba, who's involved in illegal sports gambling."

"The sports connection—that's what interested Reynolds!" Nick remembered the videotape of the football game. Luckily he'd brought it in his suitcase on the off-chance Rita knew something about it.

"I suppose so," she agreed. "Anyway, Reynolds asked me about Horace, about what we did on certain dates he named. At first I clammed up, but later, when I knew Horace was about to ditch me,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I started talking. I didn't have any solid information about Norman Elba, though."

"What was Reynolds doing at the Melrose home last Halloween?"

"He'd learned something and he went to confront Horace with it. Horace thought it was a routine interview and agreed to see him. I told Reynolds he should have settled for a statement over the phone, but he wanted to see Horace's face. He saw it, all right, and got a bullet for his trouble."

"You were at the hospital when he died," Nick said.

She looked surprised. "How did you know that?"

"His editor told me."

"Yeah, well, I went up there with him. You know. He was a handsome guy, young."

"Then you saw the shooting?"

"Not really: I was waiting in the car out on the main road, so Horace wouldn't see me. I followed the ambulance to the hospital and told them I was his fiancée."

"Did he talk to you?"

"Just a few words before he died. He said to get the pumpkin. 'It's on the pumpkin.' Those were his exact words."

"*On* the pumpkin, not *in* it?"

"*On*. I'm sure of that. But the next day when I returned to Horace's place, the pumpkins were gone—stored away for another year. Horace didn't want me snooping around with his wife there—he sent me away and warned me not to come back. He promised to send me money, and he has, but I keep remembering Tom Reynolds, a nice guy who didn't deserve what he got. And I keep remembering the dirty deal Horace handed me. When another Halloween rolled around I decided I should try to even the score, for Reynolds and me both."

Nick turned over the orange plastic globes, searching again for markings. "There's only the price on this one. Unless—"

"What is it?"

"This 274 scrawled on here with a black grease pencil. You said Reynolds was a photo editor besides being a sportswriter. He might have carried a grease pencil to mark photos, and when he saw the Melrose security guards drawing their guns he managed to mark this number on the pumpkin."

"I thought it was the price," Rita said.

"So did I. But $2.74 isn't a likely price for it. And there's no decimal point. It's not a price at all, but a number."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"A date?"

"February 1974? I doubt it. He'd have had time to put a line or dash separating the numbers if he meant them to be separated."

"Then what could it be?"

"Something important to him. The key to whatever he'd uncovered about Melrose and Norman Elba. I wonder—"

Nick was interrupted by a knock at the door. "Room service!"

Rita Spangles looked blank. "I didn't order anything."

"Open the door slowly," Nick whispered, slipping behind it.

But as soon as her hand turned the knob the door sprang open, propelled by a brawny man who barreled forward to grab Rita and cover her mouth before she could scream. Nick shoved back on the door, knocking a second man off balance, then dove for the one holding Rita. As they toppled, wrestling, to the floor, the second man recovered enough to shout, "Get the pumpkins!"

Rita snatched up a lamp and brought it down on the head of Nick's adversary, stunning him. Then she turned toward the man who had spoken. "I know you," she said, "you're Norman Elba!"

The gambler smiled and reached inside his jacket. Nick moved fast, almost by reflex, hurling the broken lamp at Elba's head just as a snub-nosed revolver appeared in his hand.

It was a brief battle. When it was over, Nick and Rita had Norman Elba and his henchman tied hand and foot with a haphazard collection of pantyhose, neckties, and a torn-up pillowcase.

"Melrose knew where to find you," Nick explained to Rita. "He guessed you hired me to steal the pumpkins and sent Elba after you." He turned to the gambler. "Isn't that right?"

"Go to hell!"

Nick held up the pumpkin. "What does 274 mean?"

"You tell me. You wanted it bad enough to steal it."

"It was Tom Reynolds' dying message, hidden for a year after his murder, and somehow it ties you and Melrose together."

Elba merely smiled. Rita appealed to Nick. "We can't hold him here forever."

"No," he agreed. There was a sound from the room next door. It sounded like a football game on television, and he remembered that the games from the States were shown here on cable. It would be Monday evening back East. Then he thought again of the videotape Paul Karoski had loaned him. "Of course—that's it!"

"What is?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Does the hotel have a video recorder somewhere?"

"There's one in the lounge downstairs. They play tapes of horse races in the afternoon and the guests make small wagers."

"Come on," Nick said. "I've got a tape in my room I want to play."

The lounge was unoccupied when they reached it and he slipped the tape into the machine. Then he turned on the set and pushed the FAST FORWARD button on the video recorder.

"What are you doing?" Rita asked.

"These machines all have digital counters to indicate the relative position of programs or scenes on a tape. See it there? It's almost to one hundred already. When it nears 274 we'll stop it and play the tape at its regular speed. I think we'll see something interesting—something Reynolds' editor missed because he didn't know where to look."

He waited another moment and stopped the tape at 270. Then he pushed the PLAY button. "But they're not even showing the game," Rita complained. "The camera's panning over the crowd in the stands."

"And there it is!" Nick quickly pressed the PAUSE button and the image froze on the screen. It was a picture of Horace Melrose and Norman Elba with their heads together in deep conversation. "There's the proof Tom Reynolds spotted! When he confronted Melrose with what he had, Melrose ordered his security guards to shoot him. But Reynolds managed to scrawl that number on the pumpkin, and to tell you about it before he died."

"But why didn't Horace try to recover this tape?"

"Reynolds may not have been that specific about the nature of his evidence. Or Melrose might have figured it was better not to call attention to the tape at all. If he led Karoski to believe it was valuable, he could have gotten another copy easily enough and looked at it a bit more carefully."

"What should we do now?" she asked.

Nick thought about it as he rewound the video tape. "Phone Paul Karoski in Philadelphia and tell him what we've got. Then we'll turn Elba and his friend over to the local police and I'll be heading home—as soon as you pay me my fee."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DEPARTMENT OF "FIRST STORIES"

Sammy was five years old the first time he called. It was midnight. His mother was laughing in the background. Then a glass broke.

An exceptionally fine "first story"—number 605—by Lilly Carlson, a free-lance writer and photographer, who is presently working on a book for children in foster care . . .

LOCKED DOORS

by LILLY CARLSON

November 1982

I'm writing at my desk. It's 7:00 P.M. and I've broken my schedule again. I need a schedule. Three hours writing in the morning, three pages completed. One hour of reading. Six days a week, every week. But I cheat. I write three hours, then three more. I'm not supposed to work at night. I should relax then, take a bath. But here I am. Work controls fear.

Locked doors.

Through the window facing my desk the rising moon is almost full.

I live on a small island in Puget Sound, in a whitewashed, shuttered town by the sea. A writer, I'm divorced, with two boys. Ezra is ten, Sammy nine. We have a parakeet named Sondheim and a shepherd called Dog.

The children are upstairs, waiting for me to come read to them. Ezra is on the phone to his father in Los Angeles. Sammy is taking a shower.

Locked doors.

© 1983 by Lilly Carlson.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It's 7:30. I sit on my big bed, a child on each side of me. We're reading *Treasure Island*. As I read, I think about tomorrow's lunch. The adoption-homefinder is coming over from the mainland. Sitting at the round oak table in my sunny kitchen, she will question me as she chews her quiche: How much money do you have? Do you date? How do you manage alone? Why do you want to adopt this child?

I'll answer with enthusiasm and candor. Inside, I'll be screaming: Who are you? What allows you to question me? I saved this child, not you. For the first five years of his life, the people here saw what was going on and did nothing. Why? In my first conversation with a social worker, she asked me, "Do you know what you're getting into? The people here take care of their own. *And* she's rich."

No one would have anything to do with them.

The first time Sammy called me he was five. Ezra and I had just moved here from Los Angeles . . .

He called at midnight, asking if he could spend the night with me and Ezra (they'd met in the playground). I heard his mother laughing in the background, then a glass breaking . . .

From that call to the others:

"Marta? This is Sammy," he'd say. "Can I come over, please?"

"Marta? This is Sammy. I was wondering if I could come over for the night?"

"Marta? This is Sammy. Do you think I could spend the weekend with you?"

Again and again I said no. But after a few weeks I began to question people. I asked the principal. I asked the pediatrician. I asked everyone I met: Who are Sammy and Christine?

And everyone said: Stay away from them. Don't. Do *not* get involved.

But the phone kept ringing. "Marta? This is Sammy . . . "

Locked doors.

I began to get to know them: Ezra invited Sammy over for his birthday. When Christine came to pick him up, she was drunk. She invited me to her house. We all spent time together. Later, I drove her around when her license was revoked.

It took over a year, but late one December evening two and a half years ago I went with a social worker, two policemen, and a Court

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Order to Christine's house on the cliffs. When I left, Sammy was with me.

He got into the car and said, "I never want to see her again."

That night the phone kept ringing: Thank God you did something, we've known for years . . . The stories I could tell you . . . Why, even before he was born . . . Let us know if there's anything we can do to help.

Oh, there was a lot they could have done to help, but they didn't. Not before. Not after.

Locked doors.

The Court ordered visits between Sammy and Christine. Christine arrived drunk. She broke furniture, slapped Ezra. She slugged a social worker, breaking her wrist. The worker didn't press charges. She attacked her plumber with a knife. He didn't press charges, either. We've gone to Court nine times in thirty months. We go again in two weeks.

Christine writes to Sammy that she is spending a lot of time with her dead father.

Our doors are locked.

She has made two kidnaping attempts. She threatens to burn down the house. I carry a knife in my hip pocket. I don't think about what I might do with it. I just carry it.

8:30. I have finished reading to the children and sent them to bed. I search my diaries, looking for the entry right before the doors had to be locked.

November 24, 1979

Christine called early this afternoon:

"Sammy sleeps with me," she said. "What do you think of that?"

"I think it's a bad idea."

"Oh? Well, maybe by next year it'll be a bad idea, but he's only seven. And I'd never sleep with him unless I had really thick pajamas on. I mean, if your Ezra spent the night over here, I'd never have *him* in bed with me, except . . . well, Sammy gets embarrassed if he sees me naked. He sleeps with his back to me. *You* know. He doesn't throw his arms or legs around me like a lover or anything. I'm not like my *damned* mother. She had him in *her* bed. She wants to steal him from me. She was seducing him. I mean, she slept in the same

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bed with him! She always has to have every man she sees. She has to have them all."

Her speech was slurred.

This evening she called back.

"Guess who wants to come visit you?" she shouted.

"Sammy." No surprise there. She always dumps him with me when she wants to go out. Last time she left him here for five days.

"You got it!" she crowed.

Going down the narrow tree-lined driveway to Christine's beach house was nearly impossible. Two bikes, first hers, then Sammy's lay in the road. I drove around them and got out. I couldn't smell the ocean for the stench of rotting food. I walked past the overturned garbage pails, through trash spilled over the steps. I knocked.

Inside, I heard her yelling. "Tell her to wait! Goddammit, tell her to effing *wait*!"

I opened the door. "Can I come in?"

"Sure, sure." She smiled at me. "Come in."

The door opened into what should have been the living room. Though the house had nine other rooms, this room served as kitchen, living room, dining room, and bedroom for both Sammy and Christine. There was no couch—only a small double bed with an ornate brass headboard pushed against the far wall under plastic-covered windows.

The one chair, a mahogany Chippendale with a threadbare seat, was piled with clothes. Pots were all over the floor, a chicken carcass half out of one, grease puddled around it.

Christine was on the bed. She was tickling Sammy, a drink in one hand, skirt hiked to her hips. She wore high-heeled red-leather boots. Sammy was naked.

"Hi," she said, toasting me.

Sammy grabbed at the sheet, trying to wrap it around himself.

"Don't cover yourself up!" his mother yelled. "Your body is beautiful! *Everybody's* body is beautiful! Isn't everybody's body beautiful, Marta?" she winked at me. "Hi," she whispered.

"Hi. Sam, get ready."

"I don't know where my pants are." He pushed his mother's hand away from him.

"Well, find some," I said.

He got off the bed and began plowing through the pile of clothes on the chair. He pulled on a pair of brown corduroys, torn at one

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

knee, and a tie-dyed purple T-shirt, two sizes too small. He pushed his bare feet into tattered green sneakers.

Dressed, he walked over to me and rubbed the side of his face along my arm, making mewling sounds. Then he looked up, his bright-blue eyes half hidden under untrimmed bangs.

"Ma-ma-ma-ma-ma," he crooned to me. "Can I bring my sleeping bag, Ma-ma-ma?"

"Go get it."

He disappeared into the unused dining room.

Christine hunched over her drink.

"Will you do me a favor?" she asked. "Take me someplace? I want to go out."

"Where would you like to go?"

"The Copacabana! El Morocco!" She stood up, tottered. "Caesar's Palace!"

She sat back down.

"Sure. And for your second choice?"

"I had a call from a man I used to know. He once asked me to marry him."

"Mom!" Sammy had come back into the room, dragging his sleeping bag and carrying a record.

"I mean it, Weasel. Imagine that! Someone once wanted to marry your mother. Wasn't your father, though. Whoever he was."

"Don't mind her," Sammy said. "She's just depressed." He held the record up to me. "Look at this. This is my *Kiss* album. Ezra likes *Kiss*. He told me so. I want to bring it. Can I? I want to listen to it with Ezra. Can I bring it? Ezra will like it. I'm sure he will. Maybe I'll give it to him. Do you think he'd like that?"

Before I could answer, Christine began talking. "Called Mummy today. I'm giving Sammy to her. I'm giving him away. Maybe I'll give him to you."

Sammy took the record and balanced it on the back of the chair. He smashed his hands down on either side of it in karate chops, over and over.

"You'll break the record, Sam," I told him.

"I'll give him to you, Marta," Christine called from the bed. "You can have him. For keeps. Who'd want him, anyway? Clumsy little—"

Sammy ran around in a tight little circle. He ran up to the refrigerator and kicked the door. Then he kicked the wall.

His mother said, "El Morocco!"

Sam kicked again. I grabbed his arm. "Stop it!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He bent over and examined the dent he'd made. "Wow!" He was impressed.

"Well," I said. "What did you think would happen?"

"Come on!" Christine shouted.

I was resigned to taking her. If I didn't, she'd appear at my door later and try to spend the night with me.

"Let's go," I said. "Sammy, get in the car."

"My purse!" she cried. "I need my purse!"

I found it. She'd been using it as an ashtray.

"Thank you." She bowed her head to me. "I'll just finish this drink."

"What is it?"

"What is it? I don't know what is it."

"You can get a better one when we go out."

"Right!" She stood up again. Her long, thin arms and legs stuck out of a grossly bloated body. She smoothed her silk dress. Its side seam had opened, showing a patch of fat white hip. She staggered. "Hee-hee," she giggled, reaching for me. The inside of her mouth was black. I looked away quickly, looked down at her hand where it grabbed my arm. Her wrist was tattooed with the face of an electrified cat.

I held her hand down the steps and got her into the car. Sammy sat in back, alternately purring and whining.

I backed around the bikes and turned onto Main Street. I looked at Christine. "Where do you want to go?"

"Huh?"

"Tell you what," I offered. "I'll take you to the Belly-Up."

Silence. Then: "Okay! OKAY! You *do* that! Do that to me! Take me to the Belly-Up!"

When we got there, it hadn't opened yet. Sammy began kicking the back of my seat.

"I'll get out!" Christine yelled. "Just leave me here!"

"I'm not going to leave you here in the street at night in the cold with no coat. We'll go to the Ship Ahoy."

By the time we arrived, she was slumped in her seat.

I nudged her. "We're here."

"Where?"

"Ship Ahoy."

"I want to go to the Belly-Up."

"It's closed."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sammy howled in my ear and kicked harder.

"Already?" Christine asked. "For the season?"

"Until later tonight."

"I thought you meant it was *closed.*"

"Marta?" Sammy asked. "Can you take me to your place before you take my mother to any more bars?"

"I'd like to go to the Tower Rubble," Christine said.

"The Tower of Babel *is* closed."

"Marta?" Sammy whined. "Marta? Could you—"

Christine threw her arms out and shouted, "The Copa! I want to go to The Copa!"

"I know. Tell you what. I'll drop Sammy off at my place and then we can decide what to do."

So we drove back to my house. Sammy came inside with me.

Ezra was sitting at the kitchen table, his feet tucked under him. He was making an illustrated list of armaments carried by Allied planes, referring to an open copy of *Aircraft of World War II.*

"What took you so long?" he demanded.

"Say hi to Sam."

Ezra made pistols of his hands, held them one behind the other to indicate a machine gun, and sprayed Sammy with bullets.

"Thirty caliber," he said between rounds. "Small shot."

I sent them upstairs to get into pajamas. As I set a bag of Oreo cookies next to the TV, I heard Sammy saying, "I brought you my *Kiss* album. Want to hear it? It's real good. Maybe your mom'll let us listen to it when she gets back. Whaddaya think? Huh, Ezra?"

"What do you mean, when she gets back? Mom! You just got in!"

"Just for a minute!" I called up. "I'm taking Christine home—she's not feeling well!"

"She's drunk," Sammy said.

"I've left some Oreos by the TV. You can watch until I get back."

"Oreos! You never let me eat Oreos!"

"I'll be right back."

I climbed into the car. Christine's eyes were closed, but she roused when I slammed the door.

"Where's Sammy? Where's my bear?"

"Inside. Listen, I'm going to drive you home."

"Where's Sammy?"

She asked that several more times on the way back to her place,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

then nodded out as we turned into her driveway. I dodged the bikes again.

"Christine, we're here."

"Where?"

"Your house."

I got out and opened the door for her. She cracked her head, said she was all right, stumbled up the steps and into the house. She leaned against the sink.

"Where's . . . What's his name? Oh, yes. Sammy. Where's Samuel?"

"At my house."

She reeled. Caught herself on the edge of the sink.

"How is he? Marta. My friend. How-is-he? . . . How is who? . . . How's Sammy? How's my Nudie Bear, my Worm?"

She crashed across the room and fell on the bed, passed out. I covered her up. Tried to get the boots off but couldn't. I turned the light off and left.

At 1 A.M., my phone rang. Christine.

"Is Sammy with you? I can't remember what I did with him. Did I give him away again?"

Two weeks later, I went and got Sammy for the last time.

He said, "I never want to see her again." But every night for months he woke up screaming. He dreamed she'd been kidnaped. He'd try to save her. Every night he failed and woke up shrieking. I'd run to comfort him and he'd tell me the dream, beating himself in the face with his fist. I'd hold him, whispering forgivenesses until his fist opened and he stroked his own forehead back to sleep.

And every night I woke shaking. I dreamed I was Christine. I dreamed the police had come and taken Ezra away. I saw him at a great bleak distance, standing in a dusty field with a Gypsy family. In my sleep, I heard the social workers condemn *me*, the judge order *my* rehabilitation. I promised to do better, all the while knowing that it was hopeless, that I would never have Ezra back, never see or speak with him again.

When I woke, I'd go to the bathroom and vomit.

"Morning sickness," I'd mutter to the toilet. "Just another kind of morning sickness."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

November 1982

Locked doors.

It's 9:30 P.M. The children are asleep. I go to the kitchen. I have a little notebook there. Blue. I take it out of the drawer and add up all the calories I've eaten today: 645.

I go upstairs and weigh myself. A hundred nine and a half with jeans and sneakers. I get on and off the scale twice to make sure it still works.

The phone rings. My baby-sitter's mother tells me Christine is on-Island. She's seen her hitchhiking from the wharf toward town. She says her daughter can't sit for me now. It's too dangerous.

I take off my clothes and weigh myself again. Five-seven and a hundred and seven. That's too much, I think, too much. It's all just too much.

Locked doors.

I pull on my white terry bathrobe, put my knife in the right pocket, and go downstairs to make my rounds. Front door, locked. Garage door, locked. Back door, locked. Cellar door, locked. Dog inside.

I sit at my desk, editing today's work. I cross out and rearrange, cheating my schedule some more. Then I go to the kitchen and organize the refrigerator shelves: glass jars to the left, cardboard containers to the right, produce in the middle. Before I put the vegetables away, I weigh each bunch twice on the kitchen scale to make sure it still works. I add up the calories.

Locked doors.

I check each door again. I give Dog a bowl of water, cover Sondheim's cage.

I look in on the children. Ezra drowses over *Ivanhoe*. Sammy, curled against Ez's back, sucks his thumb. I carry him to his own bed and tuck him in.

I pour myself a glass of wine and get into bed, placing my knife on the radio alarm. I want to weigh myself again. Instead, I pick up the book I'm reading, Nina Schneider's *The Woman Who Lived in a Prologue*.

The phone rings.

"This is Chris," she whispers. "I'm here."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

New From TSR

EXTRA EXTRA

Brotherly Love Bulletin

★★★★★ METRO FINAL

©1982 TSR Hobbies, Inc. June 20, 1982 Latest Edition From TSR

Organized Crime Stirs Public Rage

Solution Discovered... GANGBUSTERS™ Game Plays Major Role.

Lakefront City, USA

Citizens are finding GANGBUSTERS™ game to be their best means to create strategies to crush crime in the streets.

It appears that TSR Hobbies has created another outstanding role-playing game...one that may very well equal the success of their world-famous DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game.

For FREE catalog of games and accessories write to:

TSR Hobbies, Inc.
POB 756
Dept. 170-123
Lake Geneva, WI
53147

In the UK:
TSR Hobbies, (UK) Ltd.
The Mill Rathmore Rd.
Cambridge, England
CB1 4AD

Read all about it in the new GANGBUSTERS™ Roaring Twenties Role-Playing Game.

TSR™ The Game Wizards

© 1980 TSR Hobbies, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS and GANGBUSTERS are trademarks owned by TSR Hobbies, In
©1982 TSR Hobbies, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a short story by

GWENDOLINE BUTLER

first publication in the United States

Gwendoline Butler is the author of more than thirty novels, a good number of these published under the pseudonym Jennie Melville. In Twentieth Century Crime and Mystery Writers, *Herbert Harris says of her: "She is able to create an atmosphere of subliminal evil and corruption while achieving an intimate and chatty style." As indeed she does here.*

"Ellen," said Mr. Shimada, "if a young woman calling herself Muriel McComber comes here to visit me, you are to say I am out and you don't know when I will return. I am out, please remember, always out . . . "

OLDER THAN THE ROCKS

by GWENDOLINE BUTLER

In the year of my climacteric, always a critical time for a writer, there came this letter from a woman in America asking for an interview. She was doing a thesis on the writers of detective fiction.

"Dear Mr. Shimada," she began hopefully.

I am not Japanese, of course, that's just my pen name, but she didn't know. My first reaction, I admit, was pure pleasure. There *should* be a serious study of the subject. Undoubtedly there is much material for research among us, it is a rich field, rich in intellectual content and personal anecdote. We have our foibles. I, for instance, collect string and hoard brightly colored polythene bags with magic labels like Biba or Harrods or Marks and Spencers on them. They are so pretty and might come in useful.

Copyright Gwendoline Butler 1974. First published Macmillan 1974.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I have bred pekingese and got into the way of always naming one of my characters after one of the dogs, although never the bitches, which is an interesting fact in itself, and one of the things I could point out to this lady if I got the chance. If she was a lady. Her letter carried with it more than a suggestion of casualness and even unorthodoxy.

"Dear Mr. Shimada, if you have an old pipe or an old cigarette holder I should be so glad to have a relic of the famous Shimada to add to my collection. I am forming a Museum." I questioned if she *was* a serious scholar, somehow.

I don't smoke a pipe, in fact, but she could have an old pair of velvet slippers. They came from Brains, who have a shop in Sackville Street and another in Eton High Street and their product ought to be good for another decade or two in the carefully humidified air of a midwestern American library. I fancied to think of my slippers there, so neat-toed and velvety, with my name on a neat display card, and so entirely uncharacteristic of me. My first pair of slippers were called Comfytoes, and they had little red faces and white rabbit ears, and I remember them vividly. I went on wearing them as long as I could, but during the war it proved impossible to replace them, and, of course, my feet grew.

Miss Muriel McComber, an alliterative but not charming name. "I am planning to visit England this fall—September to be precise. I take in Europe the month after." I replied saying I would be delighted to be interviewed in September. I wondered if she was going on to Switzerland to interview Simenon. Now, there she *would* find a pipe, which only goes to show how right I was to reserve her the slippers. One pipe in a museum is of interest, two would be platitudinous.

I made a copy of Miss McComber's letter, which was just as well, since my pekingese brood mother ate the original. It was a loss, but gave me positive proof the bitch was pregnant. The only drawback to a photocopy is that I am not sure if it can be accepted as evidence on a capital charge. But probably it will never come to a case.

I filed the copy and my answer and then looked forward to September, which was late in coming that year. July and August seemed to hang around forever, but they were gone at last, and I was ready for Miss McComber. I say ready, but the fact is I was coming to suspect that you would have to be up early in the morning to be ready for that one. By August thirty-first evidence (I use the word so naturally) was piling up against Miss Muriel. If it was Miss. She

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

signed herself Ms. Muriel McComber, which means you're allowed to choose and damn you if you get it wrong. If she had a husband, I suppose he's looking for her now. May he go on looking.

I got my first intimation of trouble from Elizabeth Blanche, my best and dearest friend, who always tells me the truth about myself. She too is a writer and professionally, I suppose, we are rivals, but that isn't how it works out in practice. A calm woman, she lives only through her books. Although she knows all the truth about me, I sometimes feel I don't know all the truth about her, which is unnerving.

For instance, I was surprised now to hear Muriel McComber had been in touch with Elizabeth. She had three letters, two more than me. I am a better writer than she is; *I* should have had the most letters. I read the letters one after the other. The same as mine, I concluded. Muriel had asked Elizabeth for one of her pencils to put in the Crime Museum. "Something you have worked with," said Ms. McComber. "It will have a special luster in our display." Sycophant, I thought, and what about me? All you wanted from me was something I had chewed upon. And then I read: "And preferably a pencil with your thoughtful indentations on the end."

Well, I thought, she must be making a collection of distinguished teethmarks, and was at once suspicious. It didn't sound right. Elizabeth is so gullible and easily put upon. I could just imagine her handing over the pencil. I would see she didn't do it. She needn't answer the letters either if she didn't want. I was thankful she had her steely-eyed Mr. Shimada to protect her.

Then Dr. E. L. Mackenzie let me know that he too had been approached. One letter only, followed by a telegram, as he had failed to answer the letter. Muriel was obviously getting anxious. The failure to reply was not because Dr. E. L. Mackenzie did not wish to receive publicity of the right sort, but his publisher had been slow to send on the letters. His private address is kept quiet and he tends to shy away from personal contacts. For good reason, too. Although he calls himself Dr. Erskine Loudon Mackenzie, he is not in fact a Doctor of Medicine, nor of Law, nor of Literature, nor of anything save some esoteric subjects not in favor now. He is not even a Scot. At home he is an animal lover who cannot stand the sight of blood. But there is no doubt that his series of Medical Murders and Doctors of Crime have been good earners. His tales have been seen on the television screen and listened to on the radio. He has been translated

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

into every known European language. *Going to Extremes: the Mass Murderer* was the biggest seller around the Christmas it appeared. Santa Claus was putting it in every other stocking.

Muriel asked him for a "medical memento." The false teeth of Mrs. Buck Ruxton, no doubt, I said to myself. Dr. E. L. did not answer Muriel's messages when they eventually reached him. He showed characteristic restraint. She did get to see him, of course, later. But events had moved beyond interview time by then.

The university from which Muriel McComber wrote is an old and famous one, but I am a graduate myself of another even older and more famous (although I fancy they don't like to remember me there), and I know a little of the way they work. I did research myself once, before becoming what I am now. It struck me forcibly that she would need a large grant to do all the traveling her project seemed to demand. Universities are not usually so generous. They have to spread the butter as thin as they can. The money does not usually run to journeying and interviewing on the scale Muriel envisaged for us all. Such letters as she wrote, too. I had seen several now and felt a strange sensation inside me.

I sent an express letter to an ancient historian, asking him if he could find out something about Ms. Muriel McComber, who was a research fellow at this famous university, which I named to him but for motives of prudence will not name to you. A day or two later came his reply. I got a telegram saying NO FELLOW OR STUDENT OF THAT NAME IS KNOWN AT THAT UNIVERSITY. No name. So Muriel McComber was a No Name to the university. I wondered where she *was* a name.

I have noticed that when the pattern of life is on the point of breaking up and on the move, the appearance of one new phenomenon will often signal the arrival of another. So it was when I was awaiting the arrival of Ms. Muriel in September that my doctor told me my heart was more like the heart of a person of a hundred than of someone under half that age.

"You'll have to take things easy," he said, half jocular, half threatening. "Or you won't live forever."

Do most doctors talk like that, or was it just my personal effect on him? "Oh, I will," I told him.

"It is probably congenital," he said, hoping to reassure me, or perhaps thinking I might feel guilty of having misused my heart. "I mean, you were born with an old heart. If you will excuse such unprofessional language."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Oh, I understand. I know exactly what you mean."

"You do?" He looked doubtful, as if he now wondered himself.

"Indeed. And, of course, living makes it worse," I said with a sigh. "Dying would be a cure for it all."

He looked at me, clearly horrified.

"I suppose I could really do with a new heart?" I turned to him.

He relaxed a little, we were on safer ground. "There's a block on that at the moment in this country. The rejection problem, you know. Public feeling has been strongish. On the other hand, the United States, or South Africa . . . " He subsided into a discreet murmur. Medical etiquette allowed him no more than a hint, the bare breath of a suggestion. Also, it might be that he would be glad to be rid of me as a patient. I fancy he found me puzzling in many ways. I have always had a somewhat lower than normal body temperature, possibly connected with my state of mind, and I have once or twice caught him studying me as if I ought by rights to be dead already. But not everyone has their rights.

"I suppose now it's started it'll be my liver and my kidneys that I'll have to get replaced next," I said thoughtfully.

"If you can get all that done." He was curt, as if I'd made a joke in poor taste.

I was interested and thoughtful as I traveled home. For although the heart is *not,* as the ancients had thought, the seat of feeling, yet there is no denying that it takes a beating from life. I am a calm person, but I have depth and this was the result. My heart, which was no older than the rest of me, was showing it more. There must be a reason and I wondered if Muriel McComber might not be the reason. She had hardened my heart.

I believe I had some idea of what must happen then, and took steps to avoid it.

I had an old servant called Ellen, who had been with me so many years that she thought she remembered my childhood, although she did not. In her own style she was a good cook and an efficient housekeeper.

"Ellen." I called her from the kitchen. "I have some instructions for you to remember."

"Oh, yes indeed." She rubbed her floury hands on her starched apron. Ellen's clock stopped forty years ago and her apron was always starched, her hands very often floury from her home-baked bread and pastry. I don't know what she did with it all, as I eat very

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

little, especially starch. The dogs ate some of it. I had noticed that a good deal of wild life hung about the garden. Our birds were particularly rich of plumage and loud of voice. There was a badger run across the back of the garden, and even with these nocturnal animals Ellen had established relations, so that in the darkness of the night I heard them barking round the house.

"Ellen, if a young woman calling herself Muriel McComber comes here to visit me, you are to say I am out and you don't know when I will return. I am out, please remember, always out."

"But you will really be here?"

"Yes, yes. But I don't want to see her. Not at home."

That day Ellen became ill. She had been with me for such a long time that I had forgotten about mortality. Her own doctor, a young Scotswoman, summoned in haste by me, said briefly that she had had a shock, which is the way the Scots describe what other mortals call a stroke.

"She may rally, or she may never regain consciousness. Do you want a nurse?"

"Yes, please." Ellen must have her chance. I felt I should make a poor nurse.

"I'll see what I can get." She looked at the unconscious face. "How old is she? I could never get her to tell the truth about her age."

"I'm not sure myself. About eighty, I suppose. Not very old," I said absently.

The doctor gave me a look, the sort of look that I have, over the years, grown to expect. "Old enough, most people would say."

Ellen's eyes did open once. She spoke: "I've never been really bright, have I? Not really clever enough. Simple, that's what people call it. I never saw it until now. It's true, isn't it?"

"Yes." It was no time for lies. She had been a foolish, simple, loving old lady.

"I don't feel stupid now."

"You never will again."

"I know *that.*" In losing her obtuseness she had handed a bit of it to me. I should never, normally, have made such a silly remark. Perhaps the level of stupidity in the world is a constant, and what one puts down, another must take up. "What's to say?" She articulated with difficulty now.

"Nothing to say." Stupid, I was again. There *was* more to say.

"Something. Something, I know." Her voice was thick, but urgent

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in the desire to communicate a truth. "Time does wear out. Know what I mean? It does, in the end, wear out."

And a good thing, too, I thought.

"Yes, I knew you'd be glad" she said, in answer to the thought I had not uttered.

"A relief to know."

I bowed my head. When I looked up, her eyes were closed again. I hoped very much she had the information straight from a reliable source. I'm sure she believed so.

I sat with her as long as I could bear to, then I went to bed, if not to sleep. The nurse tapped on my door.

"She's going. Will you come?"

In the autumn dawn I stood looking down at Ellen till the moment when her face changed. The time had come.

Softly I murmured:

"Discede discede anima dilecta illas ad insulas quarum tempestas tranquillior quam sole, fluctusque quam ora felix tandem ventura."

The nurse gave me a questioning look. "What's that, then?"

"A grace for the soul of the departing." I raised my head to look out of the window.

"In Latin. Was she a Roman then?"

I was staring into the distance. In space, galaxies beyond galaxies turned and spun into eternity. Only Ellen had told me time would have a stop. I brought my gaze back through the ages. "No, I don't think so. But it's a beautiful prayer. Wouldn't you like it said of you?"

She was so young that although she saw death all the time in her work she never thought of it touching her. "I didn't understand a word of it."

"It's for a holy innocent," I said, turning away.

The nurse did all the things that nurses do at such a time. Then the professional packers of bodies came for their turn, conducting themselves with their decent, unfelt grief, that they have used since the Pharaohs built themselves into their tombs.

There was a polite question: "Do you want her taken away to our Chapel of Rest? It can easily be done."

"No. Leave her here. You've finished?"

"For the time being. Of course, I shall be back tomorrow. About the other arrangements. Are you the only mourner?"

"Yes." Ellen had outlived friends and relatives.

"One car to follow, then." Satisfied, he bowed and departed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I went out into the garden and began to gather roses. Two wreaths arrived from Elizabeth Blanche and Dr. E. L. Mackenzie, and I took them inside the house and placed them near the coffin. Ellen would have appreciated their offering. I remember thinking how huge the coffin looked for her small figure. The wreaths were simple but formal, which was, I judged, what Ellen would prefer. The roses would be from me. Every last late rose should go with Ellen.

The birds seemed to be singing with particular abandon that morning. So loud that I did not hear the voice when it spoke.

"Is this where Mr. Shimada lives?"

I put the roses down. She was small and thin, fragile-looking yet tough, with long dark hair parted in the middle and falling over her shoulders. She was plainly dressed, but there was something about her shoes and her shoulder-bag that informed me.

"Well, well," I said. "Ms. Muriel McComber."

She had taken me unaware, but her surprise was the greater. "Yes, I am," she said. "Have I interrupted your gardening? You *are* gardening?" She stopped and looked at the great heap of roses beside me. "Why, you're cutting all the flowers." Her voice ran upwards in her surprise.

"A death in the house," I said, formally.

"Oh, I *am* sorry." She thought of something. "Is it . . . surely not, I have not—surely Mr. Shimada is not dead?"

"I am Mr. Shimada."

Her eyes widened. "You're quite different from what I expected."

"What *did* you expect?"

"Someone older. Squarer . . . You're quite young and pretty."

"Not so very young. And as for pretty . . . Plastic surgery is so very useful." I have been many things in many lands and I am older than the rocks among which I sit.

"It must be—it's changed your sex."

"I was born that way," I said modestly.

"But Mr. Shimada . . . "

"A pen name only."

She said: "I ought to have suspected."

"Oh, you did, my dear, you did. Admit it," I said sweetly.

She became silent. One hand rubbed the other. I saw her palms were sweating. I believe I am truly formidable at my peak.

But she was made of tough stuff. "I'm afraid I've come upon you at a bad time."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"So you can go away if you choose."

"And come back tomorrow?" She was looking around her with great dark eyes. There was a camera swung over one shoulder. "Of course, I don't want to be in the way, or do anything in bad taste. But if it's no one very close to you that's gone, I'd rather stay. I've come a long way."

I could sense it was futile to try evasion. Events were going to roll on and on, not forever, Ellen had now assured me, but for a good long time yet. There are only a limited number of choices allowed you, and I had used mine up long ago. Consequences was the name of the game for me.

"If it's all the same to you, Mr. Shimada," she said. "I'd like to go ahead. It's all going to work out even better than I hoped. I feel sort of excited. I can *tell*. It's a challenge, all this." She was walking ahead of me, up the garden path. "You *are* a challenge, Mr. Shimada," she said over her shoulder. "You don't mind if I go on calling you that? It's how I think of you." Her eyes were big and bright and hungry.

"It was Mr. Shimada you came to see," I admitted.

"And the fact that you aren't quite him makes it so much more exciting."

"Have you progressed very far with your thesis?" I asked smoothly.

"No, just begun. Collecting material, you know."

"Read all my books?"

"Oh, every single one." She was studying the garden and my cottage. "A marvelous setup. Perfect English cottage. Perfect English garden."

"Not quite perfect." I was studying the roses; they had greenfly.

"But what a setting for a classic English crime," she said enthusiastically.

"Fictional?" I asked, thinking that real English murders usually took place in more sordid conditions.

"Yes, I said classic. Nineteen-thirties style. Body in the library and the Chief Constable calling, the vicar a suspect."

She seemed a bit too gleeful. I liked her less and less.

"Would you mind if I took some photographs? Inside and out?" She was already getting out her camera.

"Wait a bit. About your thesis—is it for a doctorate or a master's degree?" I asked.

She paused. "Doctorate," she said.

"Doctor of what?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Oh, literature, of course," she said without hesitation.

Liar, I thought. You don't even know how the system works, you haven't even bothered to find out.

"How impressive," I said aloud. "And you so young. Most people begin with a much less serious degree and don't venture to go for a doctorate of literature—if they ever do—until they are quite old. *Much* older than you. You must be especially talented."

She rounded on me. "I get the tone. That's a very snide thing to say. So you've been checking. Well, two can play at that, and I did one or two checks before I came out here. Say, are you a hundred or more, Mr. Shimada? You've been around a long, long time and I'll tell you: I'm a journalist and you and yours will make a good story. A good, *class* story, full of style and cut." She sounded full of thrust and aggression. "I'm going to cover the field."

I was thinking, How would Miss Marple deal with this? How would Lord Peter have managed? How would my own Mr. Shimada (I write in the first person) with his rare, oriental courtesy concealing an analytic mind, have foiled her? Appleby, Campion, Coffin, Holmes, Fortune, Marlowe? I ran the great catalogue over in my mind, and then closed it again without receiving help.

Elizabeth Blanche's heroine, feckless creature, would have rushed impetuously from the room and got herself locked in a modern-day dungeon. (Elizabeth had any number of variants for this.) That sort of reaction was no good to me now.

I could call upon Dr. E. L. Mackenzie for help. He ought to know plenty about crimes and crises. He was a bit of an old fraud, though, and a lot of his verisimilitude he invented. Or rather, he thought of the convincing detail first, and then found chapter and verse for it later. I couldn't use that technique now.

"There is a place called Gallows Hill near here," I said absently, but it showed how my mind was working.

"Did it ever have a gallows on it? Surely Elizabeth Blanche lives at Gallows Hill? I plan to see her also."

"Come inside," I invited, killing the last greenfly.

I had really let myself go with the inside of Monkshood Cottage. I think I can truthfully say that the outside gives no fair indication of what the interior is like.

I saw her look round and saw the gloss go from her smile. She really didn't know what to make of it. "It's very modern," she said. "You *are* a surprising person."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Inside, my house is cool, bare and subtle of color. I have allowed no pastels. "I move with the times."

She looked at me doubtfully, fiddling with her camera. But I wasn't going to allow that.

"Sit down, please," I said firmly.

She walked past me and sat down in a pale leather chair. Mr. Shimada is a Judo Black Belt and I suppose she thought I might be also. However, I have other skills.

"So you're a journalist? I knew it from your letter."

"You did?" She sounded incredulous. She had relaxed slightly. I could see her thinking that in such an immaculate atmosphere she had nothing to fear. "I thought I'd get an entrance more easily. A thesis *sounds* good. And then, it *flatters* people.

"My article, or it may, with luck, be several, will have a real shape. And it's going to be quality stuff. I aim it at *The New Yorker* level. You know—cool, sophisticated, keen. I'm going to get all my material together and then see how it shapes." She seemed to have a taste for that word. The only shape I could see was an axe. "I am going to talk to as many crime writers as I can and really analyze them." She was chattering nervously. I imagine there was a look on my face such as one does not see very often. "I am going to interview this group here. Then move on and do another group. You fall naturally into groups or schools and I shall . . . " Her voice died away. My expression again, I suppose.

"And my pipe you wanted?" I said.

"Of course, I guessed you weren't a Japanese," she said. "Some of the details you use are really quite corny." Her voice was suddenly hard. "I happen to have been to Japan."

"Artistic license," I said smoothly. "Quite legitimate."

"And it wasn't hard to question you were a man," she went on.

I could just imagine the sort of article, or, if she was lucky, the articles she would put together. No admiration, no serious study—on the contrary a flip send-up of the whole genre.

I was outraged. I think I knew where my loyalties lay and what my duty was. I owed it to my profession. She had to be stopped.

"And what I wanted for my museum was something utterly phoney that I could put in a case and label and shine a light on. You do see that nothing *real* would do?" She had forgotten fear and her eyes were alight with her own clever-cleverness. "It's unstoppable."

Well, the bitch, I thought. She's asking for it. She'll simply have to go.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For one of my trade there was only one solution. In my line, if someone comes along asking to be killed you kill them and pretty soon, too. But the *style* is the thing.

The classic, old-fashioned English murder—body in the locked room, limited cast of suspects—I dismissed as hackneyed. It didn't suit me. I could hardly hope to be original, these days are over, but style I *would* have.

I am very interested in the technicalities of my present job (as you will appreciate, I have had others) and I have long thought that the total disappearance of the victim is one of the most difficult situations to carry off, whilst being, at the same time, one of the most intriguing. The victim steps out of the picture-frame of an everyday scene (in the bank cashing a check, buying a pound of coffee) and is never seen again. Earl Derr Biggers achieved a very good attempt in this line many years ago with Charlie Chan—Miss Allingham more recently. I liked it.

"Have you a next appointment lined up?" I asked.

"Elizabeth Blanche," she said. "Then Dr. E. L. Mackenzie. Then—it's my mind, but nothing definite. I wanted to feel free. I could walk off the edge of the world."

So you could, you silly girl, I thought, those two won't notice if you don't turn up. Aloud I said: "Did you know that the author Elinor Glyn once nearly disappeared on a journey between Moscow and Berlin?"

"I've never heard of this Elinor what's her name," she said indifferently. "Should I interview her? Who was after her?"

"It was the secret police, I expect. They were very active in Czarist Russia."

"No secret police are interested in me." She was watching me. "And I'm not going to disappear."

"It's a contrivance, of course. No one can truly disappear. Matter is indestructible. It has to be somewhere."

"I believe you're in a temper," she said, looking into my face. "Well, while we're at it, let's go into something I've turned up about you. How old are you, Mr. Shimada? You've been around a long, long time, that's for sure; you've been writing for sixty years." She stopped and held up a protective hand. "Keep away from me, you old bag, I'm stronger than you, even if you have sold your soul to the . . ."

"Bag it is," I said, calling up all my reinforcements. Mr. Shimada gripped her and tied her hands behind her. Dr. Mackenzie held the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

polythene bag over her head until her breathing ceased. Elizabeth Blanche fulfilled a more natural part by wondering how much could be seen and heard outside the cottage.

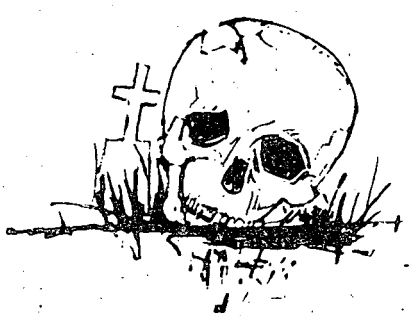
Nothing was. I went outside to look and found only the birds singing and the roses still lying where I had dropped them.

Later, Dr. Mackenzie, Elizabeth Blanche, and Mr. Shimada sat together on the same seat in the car traveling behind the hearse carrying Ellen's coffin, which now contained a second body.

Scientifically speaking, we are a clone—Mackenzie, Elizabeth, and I. A group of individuals sprung from a common stock. Practically speaking, we are one writer with three pseudonyms.

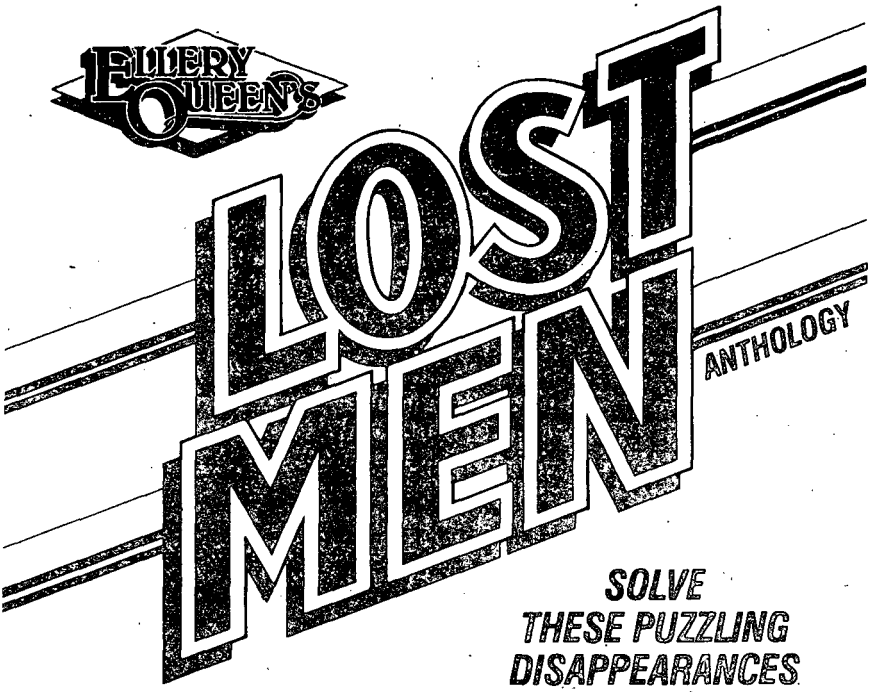
But I am very much afraid that Mr. Shimada and Dr. E. L. Mackenzie and Elizabeth Blanche will have to disappear. We will quietly close our books and depart. Sales will boom tremendously, no doubt, especially if the police should start an investigation.

However, arrangements have been made . . . I will not be specific. But do not be surprised if a major new crime novelist should appear in South Africa. Or two. Or even three. A whole school of new crime writers may emerge. The creative spirit moves, does it not, in the strangest ways. Because I *have* been many things in my time and many people, and am older than the rocks among which I sit. Dr. Faust-Faustina of Heidelberg in person.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE SEARCH IS ON... 21 MISSING MEN IN



SOLVE THESE PUZZLING DISAPPEARANCES

HARRY LIME – Last seen in Post-World War II Vienna.
JUDGE KEELER – Last seen entering a phone booth.
BEAKY FOSTER – Last seen in the physics lab before it blew up.
PLUS—18 others—a runaway rich boy, a baseball player, a playwright—

ALL VANISHED

ACK THEM DOWN all over the world, with the help of expert mystery writers Stanley Ellin, Michael Gilbert, hn Dickson Carr, plus Graham Greene and Ellery Queen himself.

ID OUT TODAY in ELLERY QUEEN'S LOST MEN Anthology what happened or does happen to them all!

ERE IS NO TIME TO LOSE! Mail in the convenient coupon below for hours of suspenseful reading.

LERY QUEEN'S ANTHOLOGY ***P.O. Box 999 Ridgefield, NJ 07657***

Please RUSH my copy of ELLERY QUEEN'S LOST MEN. I have enclosed $3.95. (Cost includes postage and handling.)

ME _____

DRESS _____ *CITY* _____ *STATE* _____ *ZIP* _____

EQA47

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The solid lump of the handgun pressed against Danny's hip as he walked. He thought of it as one more annoyance, another of the myriad irritations that had led him to this . . .

I COULD KILL YOU

by RICHARD ROESBERG

Danny Volstead got off the bus, looked at the shabby, unfamiliar storefronts lining the street, and decided that this was where he would commit the robbery. No cop would go out of his way to protect these dumps. Most of them were closed, heavy metal grates or shutters covering their darkened windows. Street lamps and an occasional pair of headlights revealed the interiors of a shoe store, a pawn shop, and an arcade. There was a dilapidated movie house that might have known pride when Danny's father was a boy. Now it was tired and sagging, like the ancient woman perched in its ticket window. She didn't look up from her paperback novel as Danny hurried past. It wouldn't have mattered if she did. No one here knew him.

The solid lump of the handgun pressed against his hip as he walked. Its position bothered him, but he knew better than to adjust it here on the street. He thought of it as one more annoyance, another of the myriad irritations, small and large, that had led him to this. A little good luck, a few breaks, he told himself, and he wouldn't be here. He didn't expect his fortunes to improve, so he continued searching for a target.

His first prospect was a porno shop. The owners had filled the window with a sheet of pegboard that blocked out any view of the inside. A few magazines hung from the pegboard, staples through the top edges of their cellophane wrappers. There was a fine coat of dust on the cellophane.

The front door wasn't covered, but all it revealed was that there was a blank barrier several feet beyond. Danny let himself in, turned left at the barrier, and found one sleepy, overweight clerk and two rapt browsers. The clerk, who needed a shave, sat behind a formi-

© 1983 by Richard Roesberg.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dable counter on a raised platform. Danny could see no way to reach him. When he faced the clerk, the customers were behind him.

Mentally rejecting the shop, Danny made a slow circuit of the floor, feigned interest in the merchandise, and left the place.

That old tension, the punishing anger that tightened the back of his neck and stoked coals behind his forehead, was intensifying. What had aroused it? Maybe it was the women staring out from the glossy covers of those magazines, all seduction and insincere smiles. Danny had known a lot of problems with women.

He rejected a pizza parlor and a liquor store. The former was too busy and the latter had more security than he wanted to confront. He kept walking, past wire trash baskets that had as much litter around them as inside.

Discouragement weighted his steps until he glimpsed a single lit business window down an otherwise nighted sidestreet. Danny turned the corner, approaching along the opposite sidewalk.

The sign displayed no name, saying only ALL NITE COFFEE. It looked like the original dingy sandwich shop after which all others were modeled. Not much bigger than the kitchen in Danny's tiny apartment, it had a counter running along the back wall, half a dozen permanent stools, a cigarette machine at the left, and a newspaper display rack on the right.

He crossed the street. There was a covered tray of doughnuts on the countertop. Behind it, his back to Danny, stood a small man in a white grill jacket. Above his head hung a black display board, white plastic letters and numbers listing the menu and prices.

Looking furtively to either side, Danny went in. His hand fell to the gun, but the counterman didn't turn. Danny slid onto a stool, working the weapon from the waist of his jeans and holding it against his thigh.

The man turned. For a moment Danny couldn't react. The face that looked at him had sunken, pouched eyes, a straight nose, and high cheekbones, and a mouth that might have been sealed by an embalmer. It had few wrinkles, even though the man was bald and had a wattle of loose flesh under his chin. The image that came to Danny's mind was of a young boy who had taken a rest from his play, fallen asleep for an hour or so, and awakened to the horror of finding himself grown old.

Worse was his expression. It held ultimate weariness, infinite sadness. This face was a repository for all the pains of the heart and sicknesses of the soul that roamed the world.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Then, impossibly, that dead mouth opened and spoke. "What'll it be?"

Danny hesitated, his anger and determination failing him for an instant. "Just coffee."

The defeated eyes waited.

"And a doughnut. Black."

The man's greyed eyebrows gathered toward each other fractionally, drawing two vertical lines between them.

"A black coffee and a doughnut," Danny clarified. "Any kind of doughnut."

The man turned away, poured coffee from the glass pot on the coffee maker, took a cinnamon doughnut from the counter tray, put it on a saucer, and set the order in front of his only customer.

Danny raised the gun to point it at the center of the man's narrow chest. He tried to channel the years of frustrations and injuries into his voice, to convey his right to finally hurt someone else. "Give me all the money in your cash register," he said. "Hurry up, or I'll kill you."

For a timeless moment the man stood there, the ends of his fingers still on the two saucers. He said nothing. He seemed to be waiting for Danny to pull the trigger. Then he pushed them forward toward Danny.

Danny cursed. "Don't make me shoot you."

Before time could accelerate back to its normal flow, both men heard the sound of a truck, the complaints of its brakes. Peripherally, Danny was aware that someone had parked out front.

"You keep your mouth shut," he told the old man. "Don't say anything if you want to get out of this alive."

The gun went back under the counter.

Behind Danny, the trucker came noisily through the door. He swung onto a stool two down from Danny's. He was tall, in his early thirties, and wore bib overalls, a flannel shirt, and heavy work shoes. He had a mountain-man beard and dark, thick hair.

"Hiya," he said jovially to the old man, as if he couldn't see the pain he bore. "You want to throw me a coffee to go, heavy on the cream and sugar, and two doughnuts—the shiny ones?"

The counterman nodded, fixed the coffee, and carefully lidded it. He raised the cover over the doughnuts and pointed. "Glazed?"

"That's them. And give me one with the colored sprinkles."

The old man gathered and bagged the doughnuts. Danny waited for him to shout an alarm, throw himself to the floor—something.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He imagined the trucker doing something foolishly heroic, heard the thunderclap of his gun being fired in the small space, felt himself sprinting down the street without the money for which he'd come. Instead, the old man rang the sale and made change. The trucker waved away the coins, saying he'd take a newspaper instead.

"Keep the rest, Pops," he said as he left.

Maddeningly, the sad-faced man still stood there, beyond fear, beyond hatred. Danny kept his gun hidden in case someone else arrived. He tried to stir the old, familiar angers inside him. He wanted them to fuel his determination, but the emotions he had known and ached to shed for so many years failed him. Now, when he consciously summoned them, they were gone.

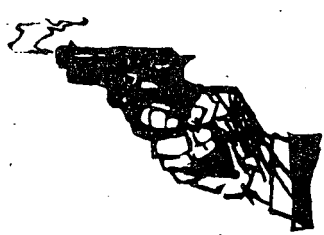
The sad man stared, maybe at him, maybe through him. Danny couldn't tell which. He drank his coffee. He took a single bite of his doughnut and put it back on the saucer. The hunger was gone from him along with the anger.

He put a dollar on the counter, got up, and with a glance at the door put the gun back under the waist of his jeans. The old man was still staring.

"I could kill you," Danny said, conviction gone.

The wounded eyes didn't blink.

Danny left. He didn't look back. If he had, he would have seen that immeasurably sad face was just a bit more burdened, another step farther from peace.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* short story by

JAMES POWELL

One day as the young barber sat eating plums and amusing the street urchins by spitting the stones far and well to make the brass pots hanging in the neighboring stalls ring melodiously, it occurred to him to marvel that the Angel of Life had placed such a fine mind as his friend's in such a humble container. "Were I Caliph, old man," he said, "I would make you my Grand Vizier."

The shoemaker smiled as a father might at a beloved child, but in his heart he was grateful the Angel of Life had placed the young barber's foolish spirit no higher than he had. An enchanting tale of mystery and subterfuge set in Ali Baba's Bagdad . . .

THE PHANTOM HAIRCUT

by JAMES POWELL

Know, my masters, that in the great city of Bagdad there lived an old shoemaker and a young barber who shared a bit of awning in the Street of the Brass Vendors. The barber's limbs were long and gangling, his features pointed, his beard patchy. He wore cast-off finery with a foppish air and his mind teemed with stories of magical adventures and romances. No sooner did a word pop into his mind than it was on his lips.

The shoemaker, on the other hand, was squat and flat-faced with a short red beard and a head as bald and brown as a whole-wheat loaf. In his youth the old man had traveled so far and seen his shoes repaired so many times he had learned the craft by which he now made his living. All day he would sit cross-legged with a cobbler's stone in his lap and tap away at his work. When he chose to speak he picked his words so well and thoughtfully that neighborhood

© 1983 by James Powell.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

disputes were brought to him for arbitration. And so wise were his judgments that even those he ruled against went away feeling justice had been done.

As sometimes happens, this mismatched pair were yoked together in a deep and abiding friendship. So it was that one day as the young barber sat eating plums and amusing the street urchins by spitting the stones far and well to make the brass pots hanging in the neighboring stalls ring melodiously, it occurred to him to marvel that the Angel of Life had placed such a fine mind as his friend's in such a humble container. "Were I Caliph, old man, I would make you my Grand Vizier."

The shoemaker smiled as a father might at a beloved child, but in his heart he was grateful the Angel of Life had placed the young barber's foolish spirit no higher than he had. Were I Caliph, young friend, he told himself, I would make you the Caliph's barber.

No doubt the barber gained customers from among the idle who gathered to hear the old man's judgments. But the young man also seconded the shoemaker whenever he turned to making bright silk slippers. As each was finished, the barber would take his warm curling iron and put an attractive and inimitable twirl to the end of each long, pointed toe.

So the two friends earned their scant bread in the best of times. But the best of times these were not. Civil strife had rent the fabric of the Caliphate. Ali, Emir of the South, whom some called the Fat Jackal and others would later call Ali the Mad, having grown in wealth as defender of the rich caravans from Arabia Felix, arrogantly demanded the hand of the Princess Leila, beloved twin sister of Caliph Zayd's eldest son and heir, though she was betrothed to another. The old Caliph's curt refusal spawned an armed rebellion in which Ali, by purchase or persuasion, bound the Emir of the West to his cause.

Wearily, Zayd took down the armor of his youthful manhood and, leaving his heir behind him as was the custom, he rode out at the head of his army. He met the rebels in battle at Qasr where, at the height of the fighting, the Emir of the East treacherously went over to Ali. Zayd was slain and the flower of Bagdad's knighthood surrounded and captured.

Had Ali advanced on Zayd's capital at that moment, it would surely have fallen. But Ali's men were concerned with booty while he himself was secretly in awe of the city's towering walls and the Great Gate of Bagdad, a fearsome bronze portal cast from the armor

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and arm bracelets of the six times six armies that had perished in the shadow of those walls. Each night after the final call to prayer when the gate boomed shut, the sound echoed through the city like the moaning of a thousand thousand dead. So Ali hesitated and withdrew, telling himself that a smooth tongue might accomplish more than cold steel.

Meanwhile, inside the walls of Bagdad the new young Caliph, vowing to avenge his father, issued proclamations ordering fresh levies of soldiers to be raised and placing a heavy burden of taxes on the city to ransom the noble prisoners by the date the Emir Ali had demanded. No, these were not times for perfumed beards or slippers with curlicue toes.

One day when the shoemaker returned from the tanner's with a small bit of leather obtained on credit, he discovered his young friend in good and mysterious spirits. As the barber rolled up his razors, scissors, and pomade jars into his small rug he explained he had been hired to care for the temporary needs of a noble family. More than that he had sworn not to say. Then he pressed a silver coin on his old friend, telling him it was an advance on his salary and that for each day he barbered he would receive another. Promising he would return or be in touch soon, the barber strutted proudly away. The shoemaker watched him go through the eyes of an anxious parent who knows his child should be old enough to go out into the world yet suspects he is not.

When many days had passed without word, the shoemaker went to the daily audience given at the palace by the Grand Vizier, at which anyone might petition for assistance or the righting of a wrong. But when his turn came round, the Grand Vizier greeted his words with a dark scowl.

"Our dead rot at Qasr," said the Grand Vizier. "Emir Ali gathers fresh armies to attack us. Our young Caliph struggles to bind the Caliphate together again. Must time be taken from all this to search for a barber who cannot find his way home?"

The audience hall echoed with laughter and the shoemaker's large brown ears turned maroon. Then the young nobleman seated on the Grand Vizier's right touched that high official's sleeve and whispered in his ear. The Grand Vizier nodded and spoke to the shoemaker again in a more compassionate voice. "Return to us in nine days and then if your stray lamb has not returned home we will take a hand in the matter."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The shoemaker might have found satisfaction in these words if he had not recognized the young nobleman. The day before the barber went away, the shoemaker had noticed this same man dressed in garments well beneath his present station tarrying at a neighboring stall on the Street of the Brass Vendors, pretending to examine its wares. As everyone left the audience hall, the old man asked a fellow petitioner who the young nobleman was and was told he was Lord Abdel, the son of the loyal Emir of the North, betrothed of the Princess Leila.

This news gave the shoemaker pause, for when one deals with high personages one must step with care. But as he stood in thought by the palace gate, an emerging litter escorted by two formidable soldiers of the Guard jostled him. As the litter disappeared down a narrow street, it dawned suddenly on the shoemaker that the ends of the soldiers' beards were exactly like the toes of the silk slippers the barber curled for him.

The old man dashed off after the litter and, keeping in the morning shadows, he let it lead him at long last to a forgotten quarter of rundown mansions and overgrown gardens. Here the litter passed through the courtyard gate of an ancient house surrounded by a high white-washed wall topped with red tiles.

Scratching his beard thoughtfully, the shoemaker peered into the shaded gloom beyond the gate. Then he walked up and down the street several times, examining the grilled upper windows of the house as he passed. He returned to the Street of the Brass Vendors to fetch his kit and in a half hour was sitting cross-legged beneath the wall of the house, mending shoes.

Before long a plum stone arced down into the dust nearby. And then another. The willow tree that grew beside the window from which the stones came overhung the wall. Looking about to see he was not observed, the shoemaker sprang up into the tree like a young sailor into the rigging of a tall ship. A moment later his cheek was pressed against the grill of the window. "My old friend," he heard the barber's voice say, "I recognized your hammer tap. How did you find me?"

"No time for that now," insisted the shoemaker. "Tell me, what has become of you?"

The young man's words were choked with pride. "I am the Caliph's barber now, old friend," he said. Then as though he didn't quite believe it himself, he said, "At least, every morning when the palace chamberlain walks ahead of me with his gold-tipped staff he cries

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

out, 'Make way for the Caliph's barber. Make way!' And a young serving girl named Shamira walks behind, carrying a silver basin filled with steaming water. But that is not the most astonishing part."

The barber told his friend how the first day the chamberlain led him as far as a curtained doorway and how two soldiers stood aside to let him enter. The barber found himself in a large room hung with tapestries of the richest sort. An ebony-and-silver stool stood in the middle of the floor.

Following Shamira's example, the barber bowed low in the direction of the young Caliph himself, who could be seen through an open doorway working at the tasks of state in the next room. Then Shamira helped the barber lay out the tools and unguents of his craft. When this was done, the barber stepped back to await the Caliph, wondering if his trembling hands could master his razor. But Shamira explained in a low voice that for the first few days her royal master only wished him to demonstrate his skill. When he blinked uncomprehendingly, the serving girl pointed to the empty stool as though an invisible man sat there and ordered him to go through all the motions of trimming the royal beard and shaving the royal cheek. So the astonished barber set to snipping and combing the empty air.

After a moment Shamira whispered, "It sometimes pleases our royal master to hear the counsel of his barber." And so the barber began to talk as if the Caliph himself were sitting in the chair. As he trimmed the beard, he spoke of the weather. As he stropped the razor, he told the gossip from the Street of the Brass Vendors. As he shaved the air, he described the art of spitting plum stones. When he was done he stepped back and looked at Shamira, who nodded her approval. Then they bowed to the Caliph in the other room again and Shamira, warning him in a low voice to speak to no one of what had taken place, led him out through the curtain where the chamberlain waited. And it was "Make way for the Caliph's barber!" again all the way back to the litter that had brought him there.

"Old friend, every day since then I have gone to the palace and snipped invisible hair and shaved cheeks I cannot see and talked to a man who wasn't there." A heavy wallet was hefted behind the grill. "Each day I am given another silver coin and carried back here, where I nap before lunch and then walk in the garden with the gardener or tend the soldiers' beards to pass the time and keep my eye in. At night I am fed a dinner a rich merchant would envy.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But how many times before falling asleep between silk sheets have I not wished you were here to explain my strange fortune to me.

"Then one night the answer came to me. Imagine this, old friend; the Princess Leila visits the Street of the Brass Vendors incognito with her ladies-in-waiting, as our noble families do for adventure. She chanced upon a venerable shoemaker and his young friend, the barber. Who knows how the barber stole her heart. He is not all that handsome, surely, though his bearing does single him out as one above his station. Smitten with love, she begs her brother the Caliph to bring me to the palace under some ruse so that she might view me at a closer hand and hear me speak. For surely handsomeness is nothing without a mellow, manly voice, and the husband of a princess must be able to advise the Caliph on matters of state. How else explain what has happened?"

"How else indeed," replied the shoemaker in a worried voice.

"Now that I knew she was watching through some peephole in the palace, I struck poses as I shaved the air, presenting first one profile and then the next," said the barber through the grill. "And no more idle chatter. No, I have picked the gardener's and the soldiers' brains so I can speak into that phantom ear of grand irrigation projects, of fig and date exports, of strategy, and the true qualities of generalship. I have even written the Princess Leila letters, which charming little Shamira has delivered and brought back sweet replies."

"You know the Princess is betrothed?"

"Yes," said the barber, "and I pity the poor fellow. But he is an emir's son and will soon find another. Love must go its own way."

"And so must I, my young friend," said the shoemaker. "I am happy for your good fortune. But until we meet again, heed my advice well: tell no one a single word of what you have told me."

Down the street again, the shoemaker took up his cobbler's stone, sat cross-legged in the willow shade, and returned to his mending, his brow furrowed in anxiety. His young friend carried about a great secret without knowing it, one that might cost him his life. The shoemaker remained working in deep thought for over an hour. Then suddenly he threw down his hammer and returned quickly to the palace. To the fierce-faced guard that stood at the inner gate he declared he wished to see the Caliph. "Say the shoemaker is here about the Caliph's twin brother."

The guard's face collapsed. He said in a pleading whisper, "Our

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Caliph has no twin brother. Go away. Spare us both the lash, you for approaching the Caliph frivolously, I for allowing you admittance."

But the old man insisted his message be delivered. In a minute, the sweating guard reappeared with the Grand Vizier, all ascowl. That great personage gripped the shoemaker's wrist, gestured him to say no more, and led him down many sumptuous corridors until they came to a curtained room containing an ebony-and-silver stool and then beyond it into the Caliph's own chamber. There the Princess Leila, all veiled and beautiful, awaited them with the Lord Abdel.

Without hesitation, the shoemaker threw himself on his knees before the Princess and said, "Lady, forgive me for finding out your secret. But forgive me quickly. What a humble shoemaker can discover today,the Emir Ali will most surely discover tomorrow."

"What secret, shoemaker?" she asked.

"That Ali has a cygnet among his captive ducklings."

The Princess Leila, Lord Abdel, and the Grand Vizier exchanged alarmed glances. Then the Grand Vizier said, "Tell us how you come to know this."

The shoemaker told how the curlicued beards had led him to the barber. Then he explained how the barber's story had convinced him the Caliph's place had been taken by his twin, the Princess Leila, which she might do in disguise if she kept her distance. Of course, fake beards do not have to be trimmed nor women's cheeks shaved. Yet the palace must see the comings and goings of the Caliph's barber while the guards and the chamberlain outside the door must hear the snip and chatter of the daily ritual. Buy why? Where was the Caliph? If he were dead it would be a tragedy but not a national disaster. His younger brother, a warrior of equal valor and renown, also possessed the affection of the people and could mount the throne. If the Caliph were ill, that same brother could be proclaimed temporary regent. So the Caliph was alive and healthy.

"Suddenly I remembered something," said the shoemaker. "This morning when I appeared before the Grand Vizier I was told to come back in nine days. Not seven days. Not ten or fourteen. Nine days. I asked myself why and gave myself this answer: because in nine days the noble prisoners held by the Emir Ali would have returned to our city. Thus I concluded that our Caliph is among them." He paused and looked at the Princess Leila. "For my young friend's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

safety, I must add that he has come up with a much more presumptuous explanation of these strange events."

The Princess Leila smiled gently. "So my handmaiden tells me," she said. "I have allowed her to treat the barber's letters as her own. But you are correct. Against our father's will and the ancient usages of the city, my brother rode out with the army in disguise, leaving me to stand in for him as I had sometimes done as a lark in happier times. Shamira is an expert at bearding her mistress up with surprising results from afar.

"When the Emir of the East betrayed us at Qasr, permitting the Emir Ali's horsemen to encircle our forces, my brother drove into the midst of the fray to rescue our father. But he was too late and was among the captured. This we did not know. We prayed he had escaped in the confusion and was among the scattered warriors. That was why I continued my masquerade as the new Caliph. In those despairing days, the old Caliph's barber died from age and sorrow.

"That very same day, a traveling juggler brought us a smuggled letter and a ring from my brother in Basra, where he was being held captive with the rest of our noble warriors by the unknowing Emir Ali. The old juggler felt himself in our debt. On the day we were born, purse-dowries were distributed to the daughters of the poor, his own among them. Our task then became to raise the ransom without delay and conceal the Caliph's absence. That is what this has all been about."

"As for the prisoners being freed in nine days," said Lord Abdel bitterly, "after this morning's audience, we received news from our spies that Ali intends to strike before then. The talk of ransom was merely to veil his military intentions."

"Which is not to say Ali would not be overjoyed to find the Caliph already in his grasp," delared the Grand Vizier, spreading his hands helplessly. "So what are we to do with you, shoemaker? We cannot let you leave with what you know. Nor can we keep you here, for you yourself have shown us how badly a secret keeps under lock and key."

"Whether a shoemaker lives or dies, a great secret in a large city must soon be discovered," said the old man. "By coming to you when I could have gone to the Emir Ali, I have proven I can be discreet. Now let me show I can be ingenious. Let me win my young friend's life, the Caliph's freedom, and, if Heaven is with me, rid us of this civil strife once and for all . . ."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The bored guard at the Basra gate recited his warning that once they entered the city they could not leave again without a written order from the Emir Ali himself. The short fortune-teller with the red beard bowed and passed through the gateway, followed by his bony blackamoor assistant bent double by the weight of an immense pack.

The streets thronged with soldiers, some strolling in groups, some lounging about watching the passing show. The shoemaker recognized the cruel halberds of the tribes beyond the Oxus and fierce, goat-skinned berserkers of the Chaldean mountains. "Old friend," whispered the breathless young barber from behind his burnt-cork disguise, "I have never seen such wildmen in my life. The Princess Leila would never have allowed me to place myself in such jeopardy had she known."

"Clearly the Emir has gathered his hirelings for the final assault on Bagdad. And no one must leave the city to spread the word," said the shoemaker. Then he found a busy corner and gestured to the barber to put up the bright kiosk and unroll the banner proclaiming: *Zembo the Canny, Foot Fortune-Teller to the Mighty.*

In fact, the shoemaker was an adept pediamancer, a reader of the future in the lines and hills of the soles of men's feet. On the right foot, the holy one with which the Faithful cross the threshold of the mosque, Kismet has incised the predetermined marks of each man's decreed fate. On the left are written the lines shaped by each man's actions and the times he lives in.

The superstitious mercenaries, too long cooped up within the city walls by the Emir's reluctance to march against Bagdad, flocked to have their fortunes told. The shoemaker spoke so enthusiastically of their prospects in battle that the Emir Ali heard. He ordered the shoemaker to entertain his noble prisoners, for the rebel Emir was lavish in his hospitality, wishing to win his captives over to his side.

So the old shoemaker and the young barber arrived at the wing of the Emir's palace, within whose luxurious confines the flower of Bagdad was allowed every freedom.

They set up the kiosk in a garden hung with lanterns and nightingales in cages beside a splashing fountain, and the captives, as bored as halberdier or mountaineer, came forward one by one to have the soles of their feet read.

At last a young man who resembled Shamira's description of the Caliph's disguise stepped inside the narrow tent. Tossing the old

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

man a gold coin, he sat down on the customers' stool, planted his feet squarely on the ground, and leaned forward with his elbows on his knees.

"Fortune-teller, that gold is for your time," he said. "I do not care to know my future, but my friends would chafe me if I did not come, saying I feared it." Without doubt this was the young Caliph, who dreaded his high office might be written on his soles.

"Perhaps my lord would like to pass that time reading news from home," said the shoemaker, producing a letter from the Princess Leila written at his direction.

When the Caliph had devoured the few brief lines he demanded, "And what is this plan of yours of which she speaks?"

"Soon, my lord," said the old man. "But we have much to do within the space of one reading." Together the shoemaker and the barber blacked the Caliph's face. Together the Caliph and the shoemaker made the barber's face pale again. Then came an exchange of clothes and the barber swept out of the tent as he imagined a Caliph in disguise might sweep.

When the shoemaker had read what feet remained, he left the palace under the sharp-eyed guards, followed by the Caliph-black-amoor, bent double under the weight of the fortune-teller's gear. The shoemaker led the Caliph to the safety of a modest room on a modest street and left him there. Then the old man returned to the Emir's palace. The ring which had accompanied the Caliph's letter to his sister was all the shoemaker needed to gain the Emir's presence.

Ali was entertaining his mercenary generals at a loud banquet. Laughing with counterfeit heartiness at some coarse joke, the Emir left his guests when he saw the shoemaker arrive. Affecting as much of a warrior's stride as his girth would permit, the fat conniver led the old man aside and drew a large turquoise ring from his finger. Holding it by the rundel in front of the shoemaker's nose, he said, "Tell me you found that signet ring on a young corpse on the field of Qasr and I will trade you this ring for it."

"I bring your excellency better news at a much smaller price," said the shoemaker. "The Caliph lives."

"Why should a live Caliph be good news to us?" growled Ali.

"Because he is among your excellency's prisoners."

The Emir cocked a skeptical eyebrow but gestured to the old man to continue.

"Your excellency hired me to tell the fortunes of your prisoners,"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

said the shoemaker. "Among them was one who regarded my turban with some interest. Though driven from Bagdad years ago, I still wrap my headgear in the manner of that city. When this prisoner asked me of recent news from Bagdad, I thought I might satisfy his homesickness and earn an extra coin by telling him such rumors as I'd heard here in the streets.

"Throughout this he watched me with careful eyes. When I had done, he offered me gold to carry a letter to Bagdad. What could I say? I knew no one could leave the city. Still, it would have been nice to be paid to put a young warrior's parents' mind to rest. So I said I would deliver the letter. He scribbled some lines on the spot and gave me that signet ring which he said would get me past the guards at the Bagdad gate. This last I took as braggart talk until I returned home and had a chance to examine the signet in the light. It was the seal of the damnable House of Zayd!"

The shoemaker drew the letter from inside his shirt. "And here, your excellency, is what he wrote."

As the Emir read the Caliph's message announcing his captivity to his sister, the shoemaker continued his story as though carried away by his enmity toward the House of Zayd. "Years ago, the old Caliph destroyed my happiness utterly," he said. "Then I had a dutiful daughter as beautiful as a flower. She loved the son of a prosperous baker. But when I read their fortunes, I saw a life of wedded tragedy together. Every man's fate is inscribed clearly on the bottoms of his feet. As we walk through life, each step prints behind us a map of the journey we are taking. So I blessed the fact that I was poor. The baker would never allow the marriage without a dowry.

"But then to honor the birth of his son and heir and the Princess Leila, the Caliph Zayd, cursed be his name, distributed purse-dowries to the needful, my daughter among them. I begged them not to marry. I spoke of monstrous children, illness, dishonor. But the clamor of love drowned out my words. And so my daughter married the baker's son."

The Emir had been poring thoughtfully over the letter. He looked up when the shoemaker stopped talking, and having only half heard what was said he asked, "A tragic union?"

"A perfect marriage," groaned the shoemaker. "They have ten wonderful, healthy children. Nor has their love dimmed across the prosperous years. But that very happiness drove a silent knife into my heart, and whenever my neighbors admired my grandchildren

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I saw it as a mocking of my art. This secret laughter drove me from Bagdad to your great city where I was unknown. And so today I curse the House of Zayd!"

The shoemaker's venom pleased the Emir. "Point out this prisoner to me," he murmured, "and together let us watch his slow death."

The shoemaker dared to lay his hand on the Emir's sleeve. "Your excellency," he urged, "if you kill this one, his younger brother will only take his place. I wish to see the House of Zayd perish utterly, root and branch. And so should you, lest your dreams when you sleep in the Caliph's bed be haunted by upstart rivals from that damnable seed!"

"True," said the Emir.

"Then you must double the guard around your noble prisoners but other than that act as though you did not know the Caliph is in your hands."

"To what purpose?" demanded the Emir.

With a conspirator's low voice and his eyes looking to this side and that, the shoemaker murmured, "Would your excellency not like to be called the Caliph Ali, Lion of the Desert, Valiant Sword of Righteousness?"

The Emir's eyes grew suddenly eager.

"Then so you shall," promised the shoemaker. "Bagdad and glory have been delivered into your hands. March out at the head of your armies. Encamp before Bagdad. When the defenders have mounted the walls, send your herald and trumpets up to the very gate. Have your herald speak along these lines: 'In his great compassion and wishing to avoid warriors' blood and widows' tears, the Emir Ali casts aside the weight of years and challenges the young Caliph to single combat, lance to lance, scimitar to scimitar, here before this mighty gate at midday—and may justice strengthen the arm of the one whose cause is good!' "

"But all Bagdad would roar at the joke," moaned Ali.

"The laughter would die when the hour of combat comes and your excellency appears but the Caliph does not. Remember that all Bagdad believes the Caliph is in the palace. You will wait, you will chide, and finally you will ride up to the Great Gate of Bagdad and strike it with your scimitar to call the young Caliph out. But when the inhabitants of the city hear that metal clangor echo down their streets, they will hang their heads in shame that they have allowed a coward to rule them. They will take up sword, knife, and club and hunt down every man, woman, and child of the House of Zayd. Then

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they will have no heart for war and the gate will open to welcome Bagdad's new Caliph, the one they call Ali, Lion of the Desert, Valiant Sword of Righteousness."

The shoemaker's words were so sweet, tears crept to Ali's eyes.

"Here is all I ask for myself," said the shoemaker. "When your excellency enters the city, let me walk at your stirrup. So Zembo the Canny will come home to Bagdad!"

"It shall be thus," swore Ali, his voice husky with emotion.

The defenders on the walls of Bagdad laughed in loud derision as the herald rode back toward the Emir Ali's encampment.

Beneath their outlandish banners, the Transoxian halberdiers, unused to mockery, scowled among themselves. Beneath their dark, rude standards, the goat-shirted tribesmen of the Chaldean mountains scratched themselves and glowered that others found them laughable. But at last the bright sun's heavy chariot achieved the top of its daily hill and paused there to mark the noon.

Fitted into his dainty armor and helped astride his horse, Ali turned in his saddle to give one last look at the fortune-teller, who answered with an encouraging smile. Ali didn't think to wonder what had become of the fortune-teller's blackamoor servant who had accompanied them from Basra. Emirs do not concern themselves with petty matters such as that, or a mere night-sentry's report of a shadow flitting from the encampment to the Bagdad wall. Instead, Ali grabbed up his lance and rode off between the bright pavilions of his army and across the sands, a fat man on a small fast steed with silver trappings.

Half clown, half Caliph-to-be, the Emir doffed his helmet to the jeering and hooting defenders on the walls. Then he reined in his horse opposite the Great Gate, struck a patient pose, and waited.

After a quarter of an hour, the walls of Bagdad fell into uneasy silence just as the fortune-teller had predicted. At his back, Ali could now hear the contemptuous taunting of his own soldiers calling on the young Caliph to show himself. A counterfeit pride which only the false can feel swelled in the Emir's chest. He spurred his horse up to the gate. When Ali drew the scimitar, his army gave a mighty triumphant shout. When he struck the Great Gate, the bronze rang like the mournful clash of six-times-six ghost armies, like the terrible moan of a black simoon straight from the depths of hell. It was here that some say the Emir went mad, for he gave a wild, pale look around him. But he fought down his trembling limbs and, taking

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

strength from the titles the fortune-teller had called him, Lion of the Desert, Valiant Sword of Righteousness, he maneuvered his horse back out onto the sand. Mustering an expression of contempt, he waited for the Caliph he knew could not come.

At last the slow gate began its outward swing on its mighty hinges, and the Emir prepared a haughty smile to receive Bagdad's homage. But instead he saw the young Caliph in bright armor riding full gallop at him with agile lance and scimitar.

Without pausing to wonder how his prisoner came to be there, the Emir Ali threw down his lance to free both hands for the rein and spurred his horse back toward his encampment. But the Transoxians' contemptuous roar and the cruel faces of the Chaldean mountaineers told him he would find no refuge there. Ali turned his horse's head toward the desert and, throwing away scimitar, buckler, and helmet, he rode as far into the wilderness as he could as quickly as he was able, never to be seen in the Caliphate again.

My masters, I have not forgotten your order that I provide you a story with a twist in the tail. Know then that when the shoemaker's young friend returned to Bagdad with the other prisoners, he was named barber to the Caliph by that grateful ruler. Know also that the barber had the sense to listen to his old friend's advice and marry Shamira.

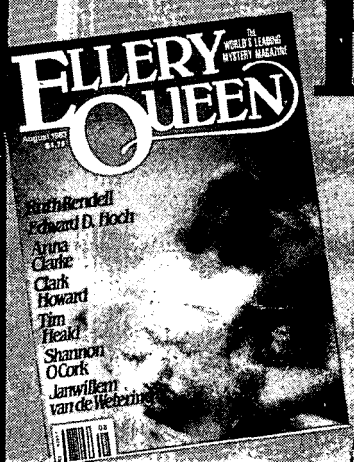
For his part, the shoemaker refused all rewards. Still, just to be known as a friend of the Caliph's barber brought him a steady clientele from court. He prospered and was able to take on three apprentices. So whenever the young barber came to visit his old friend in the Street of the Brass Vendors, there were always many pairs of slippers awaiting his ready curling iron.

One day at a solemn audience for the investiture of Lord Abdel, Princess Leila's husband, as Emir of the South, the young Caliph paused amidst the ceremony and a puzzled frown marked his brow. Then he threw back his head and laughed loudly. In an instant the courtiers saw what he had seen and they laughed, too. For all their slippers ended in a curl identical to the one on the end of the Caliph's beard. Good laughter rang on all sides. You would have envied that laughter, my masters, for those were happy days and the Great Gate of Bagdad spoke no more in that generation.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MYSTERY READERS...
PLAY THE TRUMP CARD WITH
ELLERY QUEEN

THE WORLD'S LEADING MYSTERY MAGAZINE



CONSULT Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine every month and UNCOVER the world of daring crimes, challenging intrigues, and first-class detection.

SNARE villains, spies and counterspies from the clues expertly tucked between the action-packed pages of the worldb leading mystery magazine.
In each issue a newsletter reports and reviews the latest mystery events in TV, movies and books.

And **THERE IS MORE!**

Exclusive point-blank interviews with top-ranking crime writers like John Mortimer, Robert B. Parker and Nedra Tyre.

MAKE YOUR BEST MOVE by mailing the attached coupon today, and get 13 entertaining issues for the unbeatable price of $12.97.

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE
P.O. BOX 1930 • MARION OH • 43305

Send me 12 issues of EQMM for ONLY $14.97! I save $6.03 off the $21.00 newsstand price.

☐ Bill me later
☐ Payment Enclosed

Name _____

Address _____ *Apt.* _____

City _____

State _____ *Zip* _____

OR CALL TOLL FREE 1-800-247-2160 (In IOWA call 1-800-362-2860)

PLEASE ALLOW 6 TO 8 WEEKS FOR YOUR FIRST ISSUE

D3EA1

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a prize-winning story by

A. HEYST

The intriguing story you are about to read won first prize in the short-story contest sponsored by the 1982 Cabrillo Suspense Writers Conference. This year's Cabrillo Conference will be held at the Greenwood Lodge in Soquel, California, from September 16th to 18th. For more information, write to Dr. Timothy Welch, P.O. Box 851, Aptos, California 95003 . . .

There's a law of conservation of money just as there's a law of conservation of energy, and they both say about the same thing: if it's going somewhere, it's coming from somewhere . . .

THE STATE OF THE ART

by A. HEYST

The voice was dark and smooth, like chocolate pudding.

"Hey, baby, stayin' secure?"

I switched the phone onto the squawk box and turned on the tape recorder. This was business.

"Last time I looked."

"Look again, baby. One of your workin' fold is spreading the green around. Like he's printin' it."

I swung around to switch on my terminal. That year I was more or less working for an outfit called IMM, a big financial house that lived on top of their own skyscraper. Normally I had a pretty good view from the window behind my terminal. Now it was all snow, flung straight at the glass by a moaning wind.

"Got a name?" I said, as I keyed up the personnel database.

"Nope. But he works nights. On the computer."

"Well, that's where the money is. Description?"

© 1983 by A. Heyst.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The voice turned pro, just like that.

"Male, caucasian, five-nine, hundred and fifty pounds, reddish blond hair, blue eyes. Could be as young as forty or as old as sixty. Can't tell with you Nordic types. Dresses like a Guindon cartoon."

"Yeah, here's a match. What's the beef?"

"No beef, baby. He's starting to attract the eye of some heavy people. Gonna start acquirin' unwanted partners. It could get messy for a lot of people."

"And you're worried. A narc with a heart of gold."

"Just returning a favor. Besides, there ain't enough of them funny little folk. Gotta protect our endangered species."

With that he hung up. I released the personnel database and started a couple of audit routines running. I took tips like this seriously. There's a law of conservation of money just like there's a law of conservation of energy, and they both say about the same thing: if it's going somewhere, it's coming from somewhere.

The snow had stopped and the wind hadn't started. The clouds hung low and distinct above the skyscrapers like a grey lid. Snow-smoothed outlines covered the litter and made it my kind of a morning. Perfect tracking weather.

I sat across the street from the IMM employee entrance and kept watch through a little hole in my iced-up car window. It was cold, but I had been cold before.

He came out twenty minutes before quitting time. Wool cap with earflaps that tied under his chin, a great big scarf, an overcoat that was a size too big, and hightop galoshes with his trousers neatly tucked inside. Just like a Guindon cartoon.

He got a snowbrush out of his car and went to work very carefully, beginning with the roof. When he had all the snow off, he scraped every square inch of glass. Then he broke the ice off the windshield wipers. He got inside and started the engine, letting it warm up the regulation three minutes. And then we were off.

He drove west a couple of blocks and stopped at an automatic teller machine. I knew the bank. Then it was south on Hennepin to a condo near Loring Park. He didn't live there, but plenty of fancy ladies did. Not too bad, as these things go. Twenty minutes early off work on account of the snow, twenty minutes late home to mama on account of the snow, time for a quickie in between. I left him to his fun and pointed myself toward a hippie restaurant where they

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

made their own sausage, to stoke up and warm up and wait for banker's hours.

The bank where he did his business had been taken over by a California holding company, who had hired some image outfit to do something about all that Midwest stodge. The image outfit had redecorated all the banks to look like Marin County fern bars. This probably looked great in home-office presentations but lost something in a Minnesota winter, when you could practically see the ferns cringe when the door opened.

The word "security" had been too inorganic for the image outfit, so my opposite number had the title of Director of Accounts Integrity. He and I had played some very secret games together back when he and I and the world had been young.

I found him in his little office, staring at a computer terminal. The bank's inspirational message of the day was displayed as a banner across the top of the screen. It didn't seem to be inspiring him much.

"I need an account history," I said, by way of hello.

"A shocking request. Violation of personal privacy and abuse of corporate power. What's the name?"

"Johnson."

"Wonderful." There were eighteen pages of Johnsons in the Minneapolis phonebook.

"Johnson, Ingemar Ingebretson," I said, following it with the social-security number.

"Hot on his trail," he said, making the keyboard sing. Someday they should stop calling us flatfeet and start calling us flatfingers.

"Ing-e-mar Ing-e-bretson Yon-son," he said in a pretty good Scandinavian singsong, "you're doing all right for a squareheaded Swede."

"Dane," I said as I watched the neat pattern of prosperity displayed in green columns on the screen. "His mother was a Rasmussen."

"Racist pig. Either way, his investments are turning out nicely."

Indeed they were. The account record showed automatic deposit after automatic deposit from some of IMM's most successful money-market funds. Funds that Ingemar Ingebretson Johnson was not a member of.

"All transactions properly authenticated," my buddy said, a question of accounts integrity in his eye, "or were they?"

"Of course they were."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

IMM's authentication scheme was pure state of the art. Every officer with funds-transfer authority was issued a new password every day. The password was used by a cryptographic technique called Beelzebub to encode every transaction, just the way spies encode messages. If you didn't know the password, you couldn't decode the transaction, and if you couldn't decode a transaction, you couldn't forge one. I knew the scheme was close to perfect. I had installed it myself.

One way to react when you discover that somebody has punched a hole in your system is to assume that something small has happened and to go off on a search for tiny cracks. Anybody with half a crypto background knew there weren't any tiny cracks in Beelzebub. I had considerably more than half a crypto background, and I went off looking for the impossible.

The search took me up and down phone lines, through program and data files, and into a lot of binary back alleys. In the course of it I found plenty of impossible things, all lying around as sharp and clear as Johnson's tracks in the snow. They led me right up to his front door.

It opened off a tiny little porch at the end of a well shoveled walk in the old part of town. I stood there for a moment and listened to him get it for the way he had stacked the teacups. She had to be his wife to talk to him like that. Her voice cut right through the storm windows. On the other hand, maybe it was cutting through the brick. I blotted it out with the doorbell.

He opened the door. His hair was thinning but his eyes were bright and lively. He was wearing a patched sweater and a pair of old-fashioned carpet slippers and he looked as if he were expecting me.

"Come in," he said. She was still going on from the kitchen about the teacups. "Marybeth," he called back, "it's somebody from the Apple Club at work. Come to see my machine. We'll be downstairs."

We went through rooms and short corridors. The place had a kind of desperate tidiness about it, with things piled neatly in unlikely places. He talked over his shoulder as we went down the basement stairs.

"I said what I did to keep from upsetting Marybeth. She upsets easily."

"I heard."

"You have to understand Marybeth. She has a college degree."

I knew he didn't, and I said nothing. In college they would have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

taught him to think the way they thought, in neat categories. What he had done was neat, but it didn't have anything to do with a college professor's categories.

He opened a door at the bottom of the stairs and we stepped into a little room that had probably been the coal bunker in the old days. An Apple with a green-screen monitor and a hard disk sat on a table. Homemade bookshelves lined the walls. They held a very select library on cryptography—every issue of *Cryptologia* from the beginning, all of the papers by Diffie, Hellman, and Rivest, and some very hard to find things by Friedman. I was impressed.

"Nice hobby," I said, trying to get things started. I was better at a keyboard than I was at this business.

"Something to think about while the tapes spin," he said. "Being a computer operator gets duller every year. Drink?"

I tried not to sound surprised.

"Sure."

He pulled a copy of *The Codebreakers* off the shelf and fetched a pint bottle from behind it.

"Marybeth objects to drinking. Says it clouds your mind."

Not yours, brother, I thought as I let him pour me a shot of pretty decent brandy.

"Well," I said after a polite interval, "I guess you know why I'm here."

"Of course. You wanted to meet the man who broke Beelzebub."

It was his moment and I let him have it. He had earned it. I had only one question.

"On an Apple?"

"I have an M68000 board for it. Runs almost as fast as a VAX in machine language. I can break a transaction back to cleartext and extract a password in a little over twelve hours."

It took a moment and another sip of brandy to let that sink in. Beelzebub had been certified by the codebreaking agency that is so secret it doesn't have a name. Those boys had used machines a million times faster than Johnson's to try and crack Beelzebub, and failed. But then a talent for codebreaking is one of those things that pops up in unlikely places. A lot of people who have it treat it as a hobby. The rest, like the boys in the no-name agency, are deadly serious.

"Well, now, we're going to have to figure out what to do about this."

"Oh, you won't do anything about it. I only take what I need to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

make my life bearable, which isn't much. And if you prosecute, my defense will involve explaining how I did it. You know what that means."

I knew. Since Beelzebub had been certified it had become, with a little pushing, the standard code technique for commercial systems. It protected—or used to protect—a hell of a lot of sensitive and expensive information. I drained my drink, saluted him with my glass, and got out of there.

The big boss at IMM had his desk placed in the far back corner of a ballroom-sized office, so that you got to sweat plenty on the way to the hot seat beside it. It was a trick he had learned from Mussolini.

He had learned a lot of other tricks, including hiring independents to follow along in my footsteps. No way did I want some headhunting cowboy to stumble over this situation. So I had made various appointments, paid my respects to various flunkies, straightened my tie, and ridden up to the fortieth floor. Just to test the temperature of the water.

"There's a little leak," I said when I finally got to the highbacked chair beside his desk.

"How little?" he said, peering over the glasses that gave him the look of a scholarly reptile.

"Three, five grand a month."

"Plug it."

"I don't think we want to."

He looked at me, his face as cold as the air outside. He made a science of that sort of thing. It intimidated a lot of people who, unlike me, had never been seriously intimidated in their lives. I continued.

"This fellow is onto some basic flaw in the system. If we close in on him he may go for a big killing. In any case, it will cost a lot more than the lossage to fix the problem. Not to mention the publicity."

He dismissed my statement with a wave. It was a very expressive wave. I was just a tiresome underling, unable to break out of my parochial mindset.

"Can you track it down?"

I became alert, trying not to show it.

"Sure."

"Then find whoever is doing this and make him disappear."

"I don't understand."

"Of course you understand. I know where you've come from. I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

heard it, very discreetly you understand, at an affair for supporters of the current Administration. And I want you to know that I approve. This country has just sat back and taken it for too long." He paused to let that sink in. It sank in.

"And so it's very simple. You know how these things are done. A threat arises, you deal with it. So find this person. And make him disappear."

I sat for a moment, trying to think.

"There's a bonus in it for you."

I stood up.

"I'll see what I can do," I said. And then I hurried out to set a contact marker.

It looked the way safe houses always do: reasonably clean, reasonably new, and not a human touch anywhere. Harry sat on the sofa, his feet up on a coffee table, flicking his cigar ash on the floor to give the sanitization team something to do. It was an old habit of his. I knew all his old habits. He had been my case officer for a long time.

"My cover's been blown. Somebody talked out of school at a political shindig."

"Sure. Last Administration it was left-wing dingbats blowing covers because intelligence work is immoral. Now it's right-wing dingbats playing James Bond at cocktail parties." He spat out a flake of tobacco. Harry wasn't exactly above politics, he was more to one side. "I was about to pull you out of that place anyway. That three-piece suit is starting to get on my nerves."

Harry shifted his cigar from one side of his mouth to the other without taking his eyes off me. It was his way of asking a question without asking it. This had been a shallow-cover mission from the start. I had been sent into IMM to install Beelzebub, as part of an operation to strengthen financial institutions from attack by the next generation of terrorists. The next generation will raise their war chests using keyboards in a place like IMM, not by robbing banks. A hole in my cover wasn't enough reason to pull a Marylander like Harry up into the snow country. I answered the unasked question.

"IMM has a genius working for it."

"What kind of a genius?"

"A cryptographic genius. Meek little computer operator. He broke Beelzebub. Using an M68000-equipped Apple, of all things."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This caused Harry to take the cigar out of his mouth—something that seldom happened. "Tell me more."

"Not much more to tell. He must have discovered a flaw in the basic principle, because he can break it back in twelve hours on that little machine. I didn't ask how he did it. The top-secret part of my brain is already full."

He was awed. "That was certified algorithm."

"Well, he just decertified it."

"Are you sure?"

"Absolutely. He left a trail a mile wide. He wanted to get caught—so he could have somebody to show it off to."

"This is serious."

"The big boss at IMM thinks so. He's ordered me to make Johnson disappear. In the interests of financial security."

Harry clamped his cigar back in his mouth, gave me his best Churchillian glower. "Who'll miss him?"

"Nobody much."

"Then you make him disappear. In the interests of national security."

Making people disappear takes a lot of staff work. Briefings have to be given, clearances obtained, supplemental budgets approved. Then you have to wait for the right kind of weather. And your immediate reward is a brief, ugly moment of staring down into a terrified face.

"I really hate to fly," he said.

"It'll be over before you know it."

I peered out the window of the operations shack of the little country airfield we had hired and plowed for the event. The owner clearly thought we were running drugs, and just as clearly didn't care. Nobody but our people was within five miles of the place.

The Learjet was painted pearl-grey and seemed to simply materialize out of the snowladen clouds. It flared over the perimeter fence and touched down in a little storm of its own making. It taxied over to us and wheeled in a half circle. We heard the nearside engine spool down, and the little door in the side opened like a drawbridge.

Johnson clutched his shopping bag full of notes and working papers, now so highly classified that officially they didn't exist. I started wondering if we were going to have a hard time getting him on the airplane.

"Look," I said, "you'll love it. Six acres of supercomputers in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

basement. Barbed wire and triple electric fence to keep out any distractions. People to talk to about your work. Plenty of problems to work on. A whole new life."

"I get airsick. It's terribly embarrassing."

"The steward will give you something. You can sleep all the way if you like."

Then he visibly screwed up his courage and marched out to the airplane. He turned and waved just before he stepped in. The door closed, the engine spooled up, and he was gone in a cloud of snow.

I was back at IMM the next morning, up on the fortieth floor with the big boss.

"Johnson's wife just reported him missing."

"Oh, really?"

"In a couple of days the cops'll find his car at the airport. Nobody will remember seeing him. It will be a very small mystery for a very short time."

"Very good. Very good indeed."

"State of the art," I replied.

"Q"

DETECTIVERSE

CALCULATED CONSPIRACIES

by RICHARD MAPLES

In days of yore, to make a score,
They'd use a Colt six-shooter.
In modern times, much bigger crimes
Are done with a computer!

© 1983 by Richard Maples.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Earlier this year your editor served on jury duty. For the first eight days I was shunted around to—and shunned from—seven courtrooms, seven cases. Anyone who has had the experience knows the feeling of frustration—and, yes, rejection. Each time your juror's slip is returned to you and you're told to return to the jurors' assembly room, that slip looks more and more like the kind of rejection slip editors send authors far more often than we'd like.

Only moments after you return to the assembly room your name is called to report to another courtroom for another voir dire*—the questioning of prospective jurors by the attorneys on the case, a process that can make you feel at times as though* you *are on trial. After the first day, I knew I wouldn't be able to concentrate on the paperwork I had brought with me for the erratic waiting periods. So I did what practically everyone else did, what practically everyone does at any such times—during a hospital stay or waiting for a delayed plane or train or snowed in somewhere. I read. I bought magazines and caught up on a few books I'd been looking for time to read. One of these was Henry Fonda's* My Life *(as told to Howard Teichmann), in which he describes turning aside another already planned acting project in his enthusiasm to play Clarence Darrow in David W. Rintels' one-man play based on Irving Stone's* Clarence Darrow for the Defense.

The day before I was due to go off jury duty at the end of the requisite two weeks, I was—wouldn't you know it?—empaneled on a jury. It was a murder case, which though it lasted only a week was a dramatic and troubling experience, and left me more interested than ever in the judicial system—here in America and all over the world, now and in the past. And I remembered Clarence Darrow—and Henry Fonda's superb performance as the great criminal lawyer, who won acquittals for union men Eugene V. Debs and "Big Bill" Haywood; a sentence of life-imprisonment rather than the death penalty for child-murderers Leopold and Loeb; and his crowning triumph over William Jennings Bryan in the Scopes case "Monkey Trial," not in the jury's verdict but in ridiculing similar discriminatory legislation out of existence

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in other states. I went after a copy of the play, and then the rights to reprint excerpts of it from both Acts One and Two.

In Kunitz and Haycraft's Twentieth Century Authors, *Clarence Darrow (1857–1938) is described as one who "dressed with the certainty that clothes do not make the man" and who believed that man, with an acknowledged "will to live," has little need of any other ethical or spiritual code than a fundamental kindliness, to which all forms of pride, hate, and violence are unknown: "For his brilliance as a criminal lawyer, he cannot easily be forgotten, and the brave simplicity of his writings has only strengthened that impression."*

We hope you will approve the use of these excerpts from Clarence Darrow *in EQMM. If they excite you to read more about Darrow, we refer you to the full text of Mr. Rintels' play, to the biography by Irving Stone, and to Darrow's own autobiography,* The Story of My Life.

And so the play begins—with Clarence Darrow speaking to us directly from downstage. Think Henry Fonda . . .

CLARENCE DARROW

by DAVID W. RINTELS

Why the law? Well, in Kinsman on every fourth of July, when Squire Allen got through reading the Declaration of Independence, which we thought he'd written because he always read it, he introduced some lawyer from the county seat. I had seen the lawyer's horse and buggy at the hotel in the morning, and I thought how nice they were and how much money a lawyer must make. He never seemed a bit afraid to stand up before the public. I remember his boots looked shiny, as though they had just been greased. He talked very loud and waved his hands and arms a great deal. The old farmers clapped and nodded their heads and said, " . . . mighty smart man . . . great man."

From the book Clarence Darrow: A One-Man Play *by David W. Rintels. Copyright © 1975 by David W. Rintels. Published by Doubleday and Co., Inc.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

That's why the law.

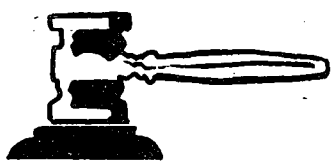
(Then, dead serious)

I've never been sure I made the right choice. The law is a bum profession as generally practiced. It's devoid of idealism, almost poverty-stricken as to any real ideals. But I only learned that when I was in too deep to get out. My trouble was, I was fascinated by the *idea* of the law—the clash of good minds, the people I'd meet. That was even better than baseball—although one afternoon in high school, with my girl friend Jessie watching, I came to bat in the last of the ninth with us one run down, two men on, two men out. Just like Casey at the Bat, only—

(He wiggles into his stance)

—I hit one over the grocery store to win the game. Nothing would ever be better than that.

Not even the Monkey Trial.



(Sitting in his living room)

All these years, Jess, we've been taking different roads. We're not at the same place any more.

No, of course, it's not all your fault . . .

Is there any sense to thinking it could be different? After eighteen years?

I don't know—I may be making a mistake—but I feel I must have my freedom.I'm sorry, Jess.

(Comes downstage, far from his home)

Now that I was alone, I found myself working harder than ever at things I cared about.

We'd made a beginning in Pennsylvania, but in the West there was open warfare between miners and owners. A man named Harry Orchard—as low a specimen as you'd ever want to see—killed the former governor of Idaho with a bomb and said Big Bill Haywood, the union man, had put him up to it. Idaho's new governor, Gooding, sent deputies, without a warrant, to Colorado in the dark of night, to kidnap Haywood and run him back to Boise for hanging.

(Straightening)

The United States Constitution may have guaranteed Haywood

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a fair trial. Governor Gooding *did* guarantee—his exact words—that Haywood would never leave Idaho alive.

Everyone in Idaho stood up and cheered. Everyone but the miners. Eighty days the trial ran, eighty days of rage and vituperation and bitterness. The judge's daughter said it sounded like eighty days in an insane asylum. I know I felt like one of the inmates.

I took the side of Bill Haywood.

He was a big man, and the toughest I ever met. Totally honest, fearless, incorruptible, strong as an ox inside and out. A terrible temper and only one eye, just like a pirate. And no stranger to violence, either.

(Entering the court)

I do not mean to suggest the workingman has always been right. I know he is sometimes wrong; I know he is sometimes cruel and sometimes corrupt; I know he is often unreasonable and unjust.

(The fire comes back; the eyes blaze; to the jury)

But to hang Bill Haywood, or any man, on the testimony of Harry Orchard!

(The stage goes black except for one piercing, pitiless spotlight on the witness chair)

Harry Orchard! This self-confessed perjurer who robbed miners of their ore; who shot and killed a drunken man in a dark street; who tried to murder the governor of Colorado; a man who, by his own admission, blew up a railroad station, killing thirty men. This is the man on whose testimony you're asked to hang Bill Haywood.

(The lights come up on DARROW*)*

Gentlemen:

This murder was cold, deliberate, cowardly in the extreme, and if this man sitting in his office in Denver fifteen hundred miles away employed this miserable assassin to come here and do this cowardly work, then for God's sake, gentlemen, hang him by the neck until dead.

But I sometimes think I am dreaming in this case. I sometimes wonder whether here in Idaho or anywhere in the country a man can be placed on trial and lawyers seriously ask to take the life of a human being upon the testimony of Harry Orchard. For God's sake, what sort of a community exists up here that sane men should ask it? Need I come here from Chicago to defend the honor of your state?

There is no way to give Haywood back the eighteen months he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

has spent in the Boise jail. If a man is so insane that he wants to go out and work for the poor, as Haywood has, these are the wages that he receives today and which he has received since the time the first foolish man commenced to agitate for the upbuilding of the human race.

But, gentlemen, it is not for Bill Haywood alone that I speak.

I speak for the poor, for the weak, for the weary, for that long line of men who in darkness and despair have borne the labors of the human race. Their eyes are upon you twelve men of Idaho tonight. If you kill Haywood, your act will be applauded by many. In the railroad offices of our great cities . . . among the spiders of Wall Street . . . in every bank in the world, where men hate Haywood because he fights against the system on which the favored live and grow rich and fat . . . from all these you will receive blessings and unstinted praise.

But if your verdict should be "not guilty" in this case, there are still those who will reverently bow their heads and thank you twelve men for the life and reputation you have saved. Out on our broad prairies where men toil with their hands, out on the wide ocean where men are tossed and buffeted on the waves, through our mills and factories and down deep under the earth, thousands of men and women and children will kneel tonight and ask their God to guide your hearts!

(He finishes, exhausted again; he sinks into his chair)

As the case was sent to the jury, a sympathetic reporter leaned over to me.

"Well, it takes twelve," he said.

"No," I told him. "It only takes one."

Just before five o'clock in the morning an eavesdropper outside the jury room heard the jury take a poll and the foreman announce a vote of eleven to one. In Boise that meant eleven to one for conviction. He told the newspaper, which had an extra on the street in ten minutes.

Boise rose up in joy. The women came out for breakfast in their finest jewelry, the men in their gayest suits and ties. They were all waiting for that last stubborn juryman to listen to reason. Then the barbecue and picnic would start.

Finally the one gave in.

(Stands)

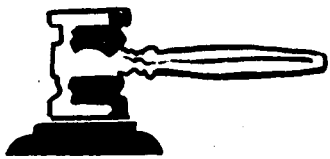
"Have you reached your verdict?"

"We have, your Honor."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"And what is the verdict?"
"Not guilty!"
Not guilty.

(A moment of bewilderment, of relief and gratitude.)



(And now the most difficult time of his life. How to begin?)

I felt, now, that I had done my share of the fighting. It was not easy to go against the powerful forces of society in the courts as I had been doing for so many years. I had fought through so many conflicts that I felt the need of rest. Also, in my own life, after years of loneliness, first with Jessie, then without her, I had met someone. Ruby was a newspaperwoman, a very good one. And she was red-headed and beautiful, and we fell in love.

Up to this time, I'd felt, along with a good many others, that getting married was like going into a restaurant with a friend. You order what you want, and then when you see what the other fella got, you wish you'd taken that.

I've always been a finicky eater.

I don't like spinach and I'm glad I don't because if I liked it, I'd eat it, and I just hate it.

I don't like shredded wheat, either, and I don't like anybody who does.

After Ruby and I got married, I think I would have been happy to spend the rest of my life with her in Chicago, not running all over the country looking for new fights to fight.

But then, in 1911, the Los Angeles *Times* building blew up, with twenty men killed, and Samuel Gompers of the A.F. of L. persuaded me I would go down in history as a traitor to their great cause if now, in the hour of their greatest need, I refused to take charge of the McNamara defense.

I told him I didn't want to take the case. I pleaded to be excused.

(Then, in pain)

As hard as it was to give him my yes, it would have been harder to say no. Ruby and I left for Los Angeles.

(Quietly; he has no taste for this)

Los Angeles—known to every workingman in America as "the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

scabbiest town on earth." The Los Angeles *Times* and its publisher, Harrison Gray Otis . . . they ran the town. They fought the unions and they always won. Always.

No union man was ever employed by the *Times*, in any capacity.

"This is war," Otis said, and he was right. These were years of hard and bitter fighting—until in the early hours of October 1, 1911, there was an explosion in an alley adjoining the *Times* plant. The explosion started a terrible fire in which twenty men—printers, machinists, compositors—were trapped and burned to death.

Before the ashes had cooled . . . before anyone could know what had caused the explosion . . . Harrison Gray Otis printed this in his paper . . .

(From his files, quietly)

"O you anarchic scum, you cowardly killers, go look at the ruins wherein are buried the calcined remains of those whom you murdered . . . "

A man named Ortie McManigal was arrested on another charge. To save himself, he told the police that two good friends of his—James B. and John J. McNamara, brothers and leaders of the Structural Iron Workers Union—had put the bomb in the alley at the *Times*.

At the time the charge was made, John was in Indiana, James was in Illinois. Los Angeles sent men in the dark of night—it was the Haywood case in Idaho all over again—to kidnap them and rush them back for trial.

History repeats itself. That's one of the things wrong with history.

I came to the jail to meet my clients for the first time. James was twenty-eight, lean, with a bright gleam in his eye and a touch of the poet. John was twenty-seven, with a strain of Irish melancholy. He had studied law. I liked them both, right from the start.

That day I began to assemble a staff and start the months of preparation necessary for the defense. Every ounce of energy and devotion I had, I put into this case. I went to lengths I had never gone before; tracking down every possible piece of evidence, every witness, all across the country. We even hired a detective, Bert Franklin, to investigate each prospective juror.

When I started, I was sure of only one thing:

All labor throughout the country was convinced absolutely that the McNamaras were innocent.

Every union in the country contributed to the defense. Thousands

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of letters came to our office from workmen who wanted to make a small contribution from their savings.

But . . .

(In pain)

. . . the deeper I got into the case, the more it became unmistakably clear to me:

The McNamara brothers *had* planted the bomb at the *Times*.

Everything Ortie McManigal said they had done, they had done. And they had left a trail behind them a mile wide. And the state would surely hang them.

"Why?" I asked James. *"Why?"*

He wouldn't answer at first. Finally he said—

"There was a labor parade. The police beat up some of the boys. The next morning the *Times* praised those cops for their heroic work. It was more than I could stand . . . "

*(*DARROW*'s confidence is shaken, his face haggard)*

I didn't know what to do. I could not bear the thought of their hanging but I didn't know how to prevent it. I didn't know what to do.

And then . . . it seemed barely possible that despite all the bitterness in Los Angeles, if the brothers admitted to everything before the trial, perhaps I could persuade the prosecution to allow them to plead guilty and go to jail.

I decided to try. I couldn't tell anyone, even Gompers, for fear of jeopardizing the negotiations.

After weeks of discussions—discussions with the prosecution, discussions with the McNamaras, discussions with Harrison Gray Otis—we were able to conclude an agreement that saved the brothers' lives. Full confessions. Life in prison for James McNamara. Fifteen years for John.

The negotiations were completed so late, the jury lists had already been selected.

And still, no one knew what we—what I—had done.

The day the trial was to open in Los Angeles, tens of thousands of our friends staged a parade. They cheered me all the way to the courtroom. I had to push my way through the crowd of well-wishers to get inside. Here, like in every city in the land, workingmen proudly wore their badges: McNAMARAS NOT GUILTY!

(A hush comes over the room; the light is on DARROW *alone; he turns slowly, heavily, toward the bench)*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

May it please the court, our clients wish to change their plea from not guilty to guilty.

(A long, despairing beat)

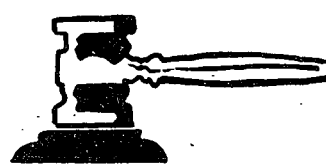
In the crowded courtroom, people would not believe what they had heard. Then—some wept. Some stood up, shaking. Men screamed in anger. All labor, all people who had believed in the McNamaras with all their hearts, had been told without warning they were wrong. They felt betrayed. Many felt that *I* had betrayed them.

(The lights start to dim over DARROW*'s gaunt, drawn face)*

It was a long time before the great room emptied. I went out with the rest. It was growing dark. A few streetlights were turned on. McNamara buttons lay where they'd been thrown, in the gutter. Billy Cavanaugh, who was a policeman and still my friend, came to my side. He was alarmed by the people shaking their fists and calling me traitor and he took my arm.

"Come with me," he said.

I wasn't brave, but I looked him in the face and said, "No, Billy. I'll go down the street with the crowd. I've walked with them when they cheered me. I'll go back the way I came."



Two days after the McNamara trial, before I could leave Los Angeles to return to my home and my friends in Chicago, I was myself arrested and indicted on two counts of trying to suborn—to bribe—to fix—the McNamara jury.

(A lonely moment before . . .)

One of my associates had hired Bert Franklin, a detective and former investigator for the Los Angeles District Attorney, to investigate prospective jurors in the McNamara trial. He did more than investigate them. He offered five of them bribes—to bring in a verdict of not guilty or, if that was not possible, to hang the jury. There's no doubt about what Franklin did; he was caught by five Burns detectives as he stood on the corner of Third and Los Angeles Streets in broad daylight giving Lockwood a five-hundred-dollar down payment.

I was standing across the street at the time and saw him do it.

For weeks Franklin wouldn't say who he was acting for, if anyone.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He did say that I hadn't anything to do with it or any knowledge it was being done.

Then Franklin was put on trial. He pleaded guilty and was let off with a fine. After that was settled, he told the grand jury I had given him the money, told him who to bribe and how and with how much. And so I was indicted.

I was on trial for three months—ninety-two days—longer than Big Bill Haywood, longer than Debs, longer than any man I'd ever defended. Joseph Ford from the District Attorney's office opened the trial by calling me a coward in court. He said I had corrupted some of the best men in Los Angeles. He said I had sacrificed John McNamara to save myself. He called my conduct viler than anything Judas or Benedict Arnold had ever done. He told the jury that since I had written there was no such thing as crime, I had encouraged the McNamaras to kill innocent men and therefore it was Darrow and not the McNamaras who had murdered the twenty men at the *Times*. He called me, then and throughout the trial, liar and perjurer.

I don't suppose I've ever in my life wanted to see anybody meet his maker before the appointed day, but there may've been one or two obituary notices I've read with approval.

(It takes time and deep breath for his cold anger to dissipate)

I doubt I could have faced this trial without Ruby, who was at my side every moment, the entire time, in court and out. It was as hard on her as on me. I think what made it particularly difficult was that we were alone in a city without many friends, and most of those we had thought I was guilty. Even Billy Cavanaugh—

Even my old friend Billy Cavanaugh, the policeman, said, "Mr. Darrow, why did you have to go down to that corner and let yourself get caught? Why didn't you send me? You know you could trust me. I'd have watched Franklin for you."

(Entering the court)

When Judge Hutton called the case of "The People Against Clarence Darrow," my lawyer, Earl Rogers, stood as I had so many times and said, "Ready, your Honor," then I guess he had to touch me on the shoulder and say, "Clarence, you're supposed to stand, too—you're the defendant."

(The bleakest moment of all; but again he recovers)

Of course, I took an active part in my own behalf, especially in the cross-examination of Franklin:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(He whirls to confront the witness box)

Mr. Franklin!

You say that on October fifth I suggested to you that we had better take care of the jury and the next day said it was time to work on Bain and gave you a check for a thousand dollars.

If I was sending you out to bribe a prospective juror, would I give you a check that could be traced back or would I give you cash? If I wanted prospective jurors bribed, would I send you out, my chief investigator whose every move was being watched by Burns's operatives, or would I have imported a stranger for the dirty work? Would I send you on this bribery expedition when I knew that you had worked for the District Attorney's office for years?

If you didn't tell me where the bribe was to be passed, how would I know where to go to check on you? If I knew you were passing a bribe there, would I let myself be seen in the vicinity? Would I have picked one of the busiest corners in Los Angeles? Would I have crossed the street to talk to you, when I saw Detective Browne walking right behind you?

Or are all these things details in a gigantic conspiracy to destroy as many of labor's leaders and defenders as possible? Or is your entire testimony against me the price the District Attorney made you pay to keep yourself out of prison?

(The light fades out on the witness stand, extinguishing Franklin; and as DARROW *crosses over it comes up again on the jury box. He has ended high; he starts low)*

Gentlemen of the jury . . .

I am a stranger in a strange land, two thousand miles away from home and friends.

I think I can say that no one in my native town would have made to any jury any such statement as was made of me by the District Attorney in opening this case. I will venture to say he could not afterward have found a companion in Chicago except among crooks and detectives if he had dared to open his mouth that way.

But here I am, in his hands. Think of it! In a position where he can call me a coward—and in all my life I never saw or heard so cowardly, sneaky, and brutal an act as Ford committed in this courtroom before this jury.

In examining you before you were accepted as jurors, the District Attorney asked you whether, if I should address you, you would be likely to be carried away by sympathy. You won't be if you wait for me to ask for sympathy. I have never asked sympathy of anybody,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and I am not going to ask it of you twelve. I would rather go to the penitentiary than ask for sympathy.

But if I am going to the penitentiary, it will be a great solace to me in the long days of my confinement to think you used a little common sense in this case and were not carried away by Ford. Does it look like a case of jury bribing? Or does it look like something that was framed up? Franklin swears he believed Yonkin, Smith, Underwood, and the man Lockwood were honest and incorruptible—and he goes forth to bribe them.

What else does Franklin do? He puts five hundred dollars in his pocket and rushes off to bribe Bain, only Bain was out, so he runs over to see one of the neighbor's wives and leaves his card. Here's a detective for you! Why, he's got Sherlock Holmes faded. He's got Burns beaten forty ways. And you gentlemen are expected to stand for it. No, I am to stand for it. All you do is return the verdict; I stand for it.

I have said about all I care to about Franklin. I have said enough. I have said too much.

All I am asking you, gentlemen of the jury, is to consider his story. Is it reasonable or is it absurd? Lord! This court ought to adjourn until Monday morning and try this case with the insanity cases. Leave out the moral question. Leave out the tradition of a profession that I have followed for thirty-five years. Would I take that chance with these gumshoe men everywhere, their eyes on everyone connected with this case, detectives over the town thick as lice in Egypt? Gentlemen, don't ever think that your own life or liberty is safe; that your own family is secure; don't ever think any human being is safe when, under evidence like this, I, with some influence and some respect, am brought here and placed in the shadow of the penitentiary.

I know my life. I know what I have done. My life has not been perfect; it has been human, too human. I have tried to help in the world. I have not had malice in my heart. I have done the best I could. I ask you to save my liberty, and my name.

(The lights dim on the jury and come up on the defense table, where DARROW *now goes. Quietly, with only a short break—)*

The jury was out only thirty-four minutes before they came in. I thought they wanted instructions from the judge. But the foreman, Williams, stood up and said he had a verdict and he smiled and called out, "Not Guilty."

Ruby was at my side, and we hugged and kissed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The first person to get to us was Judge Hutton, who ran down from the bench and embraced me.

I shook the hand of each juror and hundreds of others who gathered round. It was more than two hours before we could get out of court. I've said I felt like a stranger in Los Angeles. Well, that wasn't so true by the end of the trial. Many people were very kind to me. One was Senator William Borah of Idaho, who had prosecuted the Haywood case which I had defended. In the middle of my own trial, someone said to him that since I'd bribed the McNamara jury, I'd probably done the same with Haywood and that's how we'd won—but Borah said, "No, Darrow didn't bribe those jurors. He just frightened them to death."

I would feel better about my work if I could see any advance had been made in law since I was admitted to the bar more than fifty years ago; in science and mathematics the world has been made over new; even in religion there is an entirely modified and broader attitude. The whole material world has been made over, but the law and its administration have stood frozen and adamant, defying time and eternity and all the changes of our day and age.

You wonder what the compensations are? For me there has been one that has made it all worth while:

One hundred and two men I have defended have faced the death penalty and none has been hanged.

And none ever will be, because I would never dare to take another chance.

(He smiles softly and turns and starts to walk away from the courtroom—but after a few steps he stops and turns back, stricken, haunted)

Unless—unless—unless I knew there was no other way.

Why did they kill?

Not for money, not for spite, not for hate.

They killed little Bobby Franks as they might kill a spider or a fly, for the experience.

They killed him because they were made that way.

Because somewhere in the infinite processes that go to the making

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

up of the boy or the man, something slipped, and these unfortunate lads sit here hated, despised, outcasts, with the community shouting for their blood.

(He faces the bench in pain)

Your Honor—when the public is concerned and demands a punishment, no matter what the offense, great or small, it thinks of only one punishment, and that is death. None of us are unmindful of the public, your Honor. I have stood here for three months as one might stand at the ocean trying to sweep back the tide. I hope the seas are subsiding and the wind is falling, and I believe they are, but I wish to make no false pretense to this court. The easy thing to do and the popular thing to do is hang Dickie Loeb and Babe Leopold. Men and women who do not think will applaud. The cruel and thoughtless will approve. But more and more fathers and mothers who are gaining an understanding and asking questions not only about these poor boys, but about their own—they will join in no acclaim at the death of my clients. They would ask that the shedding of blood be stopped.

Your Honor stands between the future and the past. I know the future is with me and what I stand for here. I am pleading for a time when hatred and cruelty will not control the hearts of men, when we can learn by reason and judgment and understanding that all life is worth saving, and that mercy is the highest attribute of man. I feel that I should apologize for the length of time I have taken. This case may not be as important as I think it is. If I should succeed in saving these boys' lives and do nothing for the progress of the law, I should feel sad indeed. If I can succeed, my greatest reward and my greatest hope will be that I have done something to help human understanding, to temper justice with mercy, to overcome hate with love.

I was reading last night of the aspiration of the old Persian poet, Omar Khayyam. It appealed to me as the highest that I can envision. I wish it was in my heart, and I wish it was in the hearts of all.

So I be written in the Book of Love,
I do not care about that Book above;
Erase my name or write it as you will,
So I be written in the Book of Love.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY NEWSLETTER

CRIME BEAT

by R. E. PORTER

AUTHOR INTERVIEWS: Novelist Anne Tyler wrote recently in *The New York Times Book Review* that it seldom makes much sense to interview writers, that questions about their work are best directed to the work itself. Nevertheless, *EQMM* has published some exceptionally good interviews with mystery writers, and two collections of author interviews from other sources have just been published in book form.

The better of the two is *The Craft of Crime,* conversations with 12 crime writers, by John C. Carr (Houghton Mifflin, $8.95 paper, $15.95 cloth). Carr is at his best when he allows his subjects to do most of the talking, as in his intelligent and informative interviews with Ed McBain, Gregory Mcdonald, Dick Francis, Ruth Rendell, and Peter Lovesey.

Those last three are also among the 13 detective novelists interviewed by Diana Cooper-Clark in *Designs of Darkness* (Bowling Green State U. Popular Press), and for the most part their comments in the two books are quite consistent. Cooper-Clark includes excellent interviews with Margaret Millar and Ross Macdonald, as well as photographs of most of the authors, but her Introduction contains some obvious errors and she seems too eager to link the mystery with mainstream novels and classics.

SHERLOCKIANA: Magico Magazine (P.O. Box 156, New York, NY 10002) has published two items of interest to Sherlockians. One is a set of six maps—London, The Surrey Side, England, Europe, the United States, and the World—drawn by Julian Wolff in 1940 and often reproduced in miniature to show the sites of Sherlock Holmes's exploits. Each map is printed on heavy 17″×14″ stock suitable for framing. They're priced at $13.50 per set, postpaid, with a limited 100-copy edition signed by Julian Wolff at $21.00 postpaid.

Magico has also published a new edition of Ernest Bloomfield Zeisler's *Baker Street Chronology,* with a Preface by Vincent Starrett and a new Introduction by Michael Kurland. Trade edition is $25.00 postpaid, and a limited 100-copy

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

edition signed by Kurland is $40.00 postpaid.

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES: No doubt inspired by the popularity of fantasy role-playing games like *Dungeons & Dragons,* publishers are now designing similar games in the mystery-intrigue field. Two of the first to reach the market are *Mercenaries, Spies & Private Eyes* ($9.95), designed by Michael A. Stackpole and produced by Blade (P.O. Box 1210, Scottsdale, AZ 85252), and *James Bond 007,* coming this fall from Victory Games (43 W. 33rd St., Suite 603, New York, NY 10001).

MURDER OF A ROBOT: When conversation turns to science-fiction detective novels, fans of both genres are sure to mention Isaac Asimov's two novels about interplanetary sleuth Elijah Baley and his robot partner, *The Caves of Steel* (1954) and *The Naked Sun* (1956). Now, after a 27-year wait, there's a third Baley novel, *The Robots of Dawn,* due from Doubleday in October. It's about the murder of the most advanced robot in the universe.

JUVENILE MYSTERIES: A new series of brief mystery puzzles by M. Masters has been published by Meadowbrook Press. Each of the four $1.95 paperbacks contains nine or ten well clued mysteries featuring twelve-year-old sleuths Hawkeye Collins and Amy Adams, with solutions printed in mirror image at the back of the book. Titles include *The Case of the Chocolate Snatcher* and *The Case of the Video Game Smugglers.*

PRIZE WINNER: Coming this month from Scribners is *Dead in the Water* by Ted Wood, winner of the second annual Scribner Crime Novel Award for the best first mystery. Wood resides outside Toronto, and like the hero of his book he is a former Toronto policeman.

COMING ATTRACTIONS: Two fall-winter titles from top British writers are Len Deighton's spy thriller *Berlin Game* (Knopf) and Peter Lovesey's *Keystone* (Pantheon), a mystery set at Hollywood's Keystone Film Company in 1915.

EQMM contributor Nan Hamilton has sold her first novel, *Killer's Rights,* to Walker. It'll be published next spring, at about the same time that Dodd Mead brings out *Tallon and the S.O.R.* by her husband, John Ball.

In November Dutton will offer *The Private Life of Dr. Watson* by Michael Hardwick, an account of Watson's life before he met Sherlock Holmes.

William F. Buckley, Jr.'s fifth novel about Blackford Oakes, *The Story of Henri Tod,* is due from Doubleday in February.

© 1983 by R. E. Porter.

"Q"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BLOODY VISIONS

by CHRIS STEINBRUNNER

It's been over two decades since Alfred Hitchcock's landmark thriller, *Psycho,* stretched the boundaries of cinematic mystery and terror. The film, closely adapting a novel by Robert Bloch (which Hitch once said he would like to see suppressed so that the surprise ending would never be leaked), produced almost in secret on a beggarly budget, became almost instantly *the* screen masterpiece of shock. Since its 1960 debut, it has inspired a virtual school of chill films, sometimes called "stalk-and-slash," far outdistancing their model in blood and violence—*Psycho,* after all, shows us only a modest two murders—while many levels below it in quality. (Some appreciation can be had, however, for William Castle's underrated though brazenly imitative *Homicidal* and Dario Argento's lush *Bird with the Crystal Plumage.*) Despite these look-alike attempts, *Psycho* remained preeminent and unique, truly one of a kind. Even Hitchcock never attempted to duplicate its peculiar mood and thrills.

Recently, however, Universal Studio has audaciously decided to release a sequel to *Psycho,* bringing the plot and those characters still remaining alive up to the present day. In *Psycho II* Norman Bates, after 22 docile years in a mental institution, is "judged returned to sanity" and released. Not, however, without some furor. Lila Loomis, who had the most to do with incarcerating him in the first film and is now an enraged widow (still played by Vera Miles), futilely petitions to prevent his freedom. A bewildered Norman returns to his gloomy, crumbling Victorian home, but all is not quiet. "I saw someone—in that window." His dead mother begins leaving him stern notes. We see murder happen at the motel.

Actor Tony Perkins, returning in triumph as Norman, is both touching and appealing—while at the same time feeding our suspicions that he has never been fully cured. (It was Hitchcock's genius to cast the slim, boyish Perkins as Bates rather than the older, heavier menace Robert Bloch created, the only major change the director made from the book.) Perkins is pleased with his job in recreating his most famous role, feeling that the new film was done "with dignity." He is no stranger to quirky mystery, having collaborated with Stephen Sondheim on *The Last of Sheila* and another thriller screenplay yet to be produced.

Robert Bloch, however, did not see the screen sequel to his famous book prior to its theatrical release: "No one invited me." This may well be because Bloch submitted his own ideas for a sequel to Universal (the studio owns film remake rights

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to *Psycho).* They chose instead to develop their own plot. Bloch, however, wrote his story as a novel—also called *Psycho II,* published a full year ago. It takes a totally different turn. Norman Bates, far from cured, savagely kills two nuns and escapes from the asylum. We follow his concerned psychiatrist as he uncovers more murders, ultimately leading to a Hollywood studio where "the Bates story" is being filmed as a thriller feature. (This may well have been a bit too grimly *déjà vu* for Universal.) The treatment is full of startling surprises, with more than a touch of Fritz Lang in Expressionist gloom—Robert Bloch at his best.

The right touches of shadowy gloom are in the film *Psycho II* as well. Young Australian director Richard Franklin, while a student at UCLA, wrote Alfred Hitchcock for permission to screen *Rope* (long unseen) for a college film retrospective. To his stunned surprise Hitch phoned him personally, agreed to appear at the school, and invited him to observe filming on the set of *Topaz.*

When he returned to Australia, Franklin directed a nice occult murder drama called *Patrick* (a patient in trance kills from his hospital bed), a police series for television called *Homicide,* and most recently a suspense film starring Stacy Keach, *Road Games,* about a driver who thinks he is on the trail of a killer who brutally murders hitchhikers on the Australian desert. Franklin candidly describes *Road Games* as *"Rear Window* in a truck." His next assignment will be a reworking of Cornell Woolrich's *The Window.*

Franklin is frank in his worship of Hitchcock. He can talk knowledgeably about the great director and his films by the hour. His sequel is both properly murky and sensitive: "I want to give audiences a psychological roller-coaster ride and at the same time be protective of Norman." Perhaps the impact of the original *Psycho* is unapproachable—Franklin is the first to agree—but it's still good to spend a few more hours back at the Bates Motel.

© 1983 by Chris Steinbrunner.

INTERVIEW: JOSEPH HANSEN (2)

This is the conclusion of an interview that began in the previous issue.

EQMN: What drew you to the writing of mysteries?

HANSEN: I like the restrictions of form. As a kid I kept trying to write sonnets, never quite managing it but sweating to master the form. The mystery novel demands that the writer observe certain conventions, and to try to stay strictly within these and yet fill a novel with real people with real problems

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in a real world struck me as wonderfully challenging. Of course, I had read shelves of mysteries before I set out to write one, but I felt most of them were not very much like life. I began reading mysteries with Agatha Christie serials in *The Saturday Evening Post*. The first mystery I bought off a book rack was *It Walks by Night* by John Dickson Carr. This was when Pocket Books issued its first line of 25¢ paperbacks in, I think, 1938.

EQMN: You've been compared to Dashiell Hammett, and while you might think comparisons are odious your style brings to our mind the novels of James Leo Herlihy—*All Fall Down, Midnight Cowboy*—in the *way* they stimulate the imagination, give unusual and usually compassionate insights, entertain, and disturb. Who do you like to read? Who, if anyone, do you think influences you as a writer?

HANSEN: There are too many gifted writers I've missed for me to answer that. Herlihy, for one, I'm sorry to say. I wish I had more time to read. I know I miss a lot. Whatever influenced me as a writer happened long ago. In my teen years, Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* showed me where I wanted to go with writing, and that it was possible to go there. Of all the mysteries I ever read, I suspect *The Postman Always Rings Twice* taught me the most. As sixteen, the plays of Gertrude Stein showed me that every word contains a small explosive charge, and hence that words must all be used with great care.

EQMN: What other kinds of work have you done?

HANSEN: My first jobs were in libraries and bookshops. I was writing all the time but getting nowhere with it. In 1951 I went to work typing waybills for a big Hollywood film-processing plant and kept that up for ten years. About the same time, I sang folk songs on the radio for a couple of years but that never came to much. I cut two little albums which my wife traps new friends into listening to sometimes.

In 1954 or thereabouts I wrote a couple of *Lassie* shows and hated it. Good magazines suddenly began to buy my poems in the mid-Fifties. I wrote some movie fan magazine stuff in the early Sixties. A very small paperback outfit in Fresno published my first novel under a pen name in 1964. By 1966, with more than a little help from my friends, I was able to quit my part-time bookshop job and write full time.

EQMN: What kind of work would you do if you had another life?

HANSEN: If I had my life to live over, I'd be a composer.

EQMN: Are there people you especially admire or dislike?

HANSEN: Politicians, religious leaders, and military men, on purpose or out of stupidity, keep trying to turn us all into enemies. Artists generally keep trying to show us our common humanity. I admire the latter and dislike the former. I wish I could have known Frederic Chopin.

EQMN: How do you spend an average day?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HANSEN: I read in bed in the mornings, drinking tea, listening to music, while my wife feeds the animals. Then I cook breakfast for us humans and we drink coffee, read the newspaper, and chat until the mail arrives. About ten-thirty or eleven, I go to the typewriter and work until three in the afternoon. I then loaf for an hour, reading or watching old *Barney Miller* episodes, when it's time to feed the animals again. After that come drinks and dinner, which I cook. In the evenings my wife and I are likely to read aloud to each other, or if something interesting like *Witness for the Prosecution* or *Hill Street Blues* is on TV we watch that. I seldom go out—occasionally to lunch with friends and/or students. Even more rarely I see a play. Never a movie. Occasionally an opera.

EQMN: How do you come to keep so many cats and dogs?

HANSEN: Because they come to us. We like living creatures around us. We used to have kids around the house. But even then we had animals. The fur-covered contingent helps keep us young. Humans need others to look after. We're too likely to become self-absorbed without any other creature to cook for and clean up after. Self-absorption is deadly for writers. Sure, responsibility is a pain. But pain is an important ingredient of life and of the books people write—if they're to be good books.

EQMN: Do you ever travel?

HANSEN: I love London, and will go there again when I can scrounge airline tickets. I'd like to see Bergen, Norway, where my grandparents came from. In 1974 and 1975 I crossed the Atlantic in ships. I'd love to do that again. I'd like to see Athens, though much of it is, of course, in the British Museum.

EQMN: You give readers a sense of California's beauty as well as—no, more than—its absurdities. How came you to live there, and stay there?

HANSEN: Drought and hard times drove us, with thousands of other Dustbowl families, out of South Dakota in 1933. We tried Minnesota for three snowy winters, and then sold the last of the furniture to buy an old Marmon car in which we creaked to California. There, if we continued to starve, at least we wouldn't freeze. With the exception of one winter in London, I've lived in and around Los Angeles ever since. The weather is usually pleasant. The setting is handsome. And it's a big city. I think writers need big cities. I know homosexuals need big cities.

EQMN: What memories have you of your home state?

HANSEN: I've written about the South Dakota I remember in poems published originally in *The New Yorker,* and in a short story, "Mourner," originally published in *South Dakota Review.* I also wrote a South Dakota novel, but it was never published. I lived in that state until I was ten, so my memories of it are sharp and clear. It was a terrible place. I assume it still is. (Ed. Note: Joseph Hansen's "Mourner" is reprinted on page 96 of this issue.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE JURY BOX

by JON L. BREEN

How many stories worth rediscovery are to be found in the pages of old pulp fiction magazines, read only by collectors and scholars willing to risk damage to the brittle old paper? For a partial answer, look into Bill Pronzini's *The Arbor House Treasury of Detective and Mystery Stories from the Great Pulps* (Arbor House, $16.95), which includes little-known work by such famous pulp-trained writers as Hammett, Woolrich, and John D. MacDonald. Even more tantalizing are the contributions of less familiar names. Carroll John Daly is here with the first Race Williams story—not good exactly but a private-eye landmark. D. L. Champion contributes a pure detective tale about the bitter Inspector Allhoff, a remarkable sleuth who is new to me. And any anthologist who rescues one of Robert Leslie Bellem's outrageously slangy but deceptively well constructed Dan Turner stories from brown-paged oblivion has my undying gratitude. (Less worthy of gratitude is the author of the breathtakingly inaccurate jacket blurb.)

Ellery Queen's Lost Ladies (Davis, $2.95), #46 in the distinguished anthology series now edited by Eleanor Sullivan, combs the backfiles of this magazine for some fine tales, ranging widely in date, style, and mood. Among the highlights: Joyce Harrington's "The Tomato Man's Daughter," Robert Twohy's "Goodbye to Francie," Florence V. Mayberry's "A Goodbye Sound," and editor Sullivan's "Something Like Growing Pains," originally attributed to Lika Van Ness. Also in the cast are writers with names like Asimov, Ellin, Fish, Hoch, and Queen.

**** John Dickson Carr: *The Dead Sleep Lightly,* Doubleday/Crime Club, $11.95. Carr may have been the greatest writer of radio mystery scripts, and this collection, edited and introduced by Douglas G. Greene, gathers nine of his best, filled like his other works with creepy thunderclaps of atmosphere, seemingly impossible crimes, and fair-play clueing. Though some of the gimmicks and plot elements occur elsewhere in the author's writings, the contents of this volume will qualify for most readers as new Carr, a precious commodity to come across in the 1980s!

**** Stuart M. Kaminsky: *When the Dark Man Calls,* St. Martin's, $13.95. Chicago talk-show psychologist Jean Kaiser, who has overcome the childhood trauma of having found her parents murdered, is now being threatened by on-the-air calls from the supposed killer, newly released from a mental hospital. Jean is a strong, series-worthy heroine, and this is an intensely readable and ingeniously plotted suspense novel, far superior in my view to the author's ad-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nittedly enjoyable Toby Peters rivate-eye historicals.

**** Carolyn Wheat: *Dead Man's Thoughts,* St. Martin's, $14.95. Another promising new character is Brooklyn Legal Aid attorney Cass Jameson, whose debut should be a strong contender for first-novel Edgar honors. Finding her fellow lawyer and lover dead in an apparent gay S/M killing, Cass seeks the truth and uncovers layers of corruption and deceit. Strong in all areas: style, plot, pace, and character-building.

*** Ed McBain: *Beauty and the Beast,* Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, $13.50. The third book about Florida lawyer Matthew Hope offers an interesting view of changing race relations in the South. McBain has fun with an old mystery tradition: the one where the detective is about to leave on his vacation, and you just *know* he'll never make it. Neatly constructed and utterly readable.

*** Stockton Woods: *The Man Who Heard Too Much,* Fawcett-Gold Medal, $2.50. A villainous U.S. Senator planning to precipitate World War III via a secret plot called Operation Barbados sends an incompetent but persistent female assassin after Martin Fowler, resident of a halfway house for the educable mentally retarded. Woods (better known as Richard Forrest) is a terrific story-teller who can keep the pages flying even with a multiple-attack plot structure better suited to an animated cartoon than a novel.

*** Martin Russell: *Backlash,* Walker, $12.95. Here is a twisting, stunting, wickedly playful mystery, the kind where bodies vanish or change sex or turn up alive and the narrator seems not to be telling quite all. It's somewhat on the order of a British TV serial by Francis Durbridge. Russell manages the tricky plot well, though the windup seems a little too fortuitous.

*** Terence Hughes: *The Day They Stole the Queen Mary,* Morrow, $13.95. In 1943, the world's most famous luxury ship, refitted to be a troop-carrier, is transporting a large group of German prisoners *and* Winston Churchill from Britain to the United States. A Nazi spy plans to capture the ship (and the Prime Minister) for Germany. Hughes produces an exciting, well constructed espionage thriller worthy of its tantalizing premise.

*** Max Allan Collins: *No Cure for Death,* Walker, $12.95. The second case for Iowa sleuth Mallory, set in the mid-'70s, is a prequel to the author's *Baby Blue Rip-Off.* There are some well realized characters here, notably an elderly millionaire who made his fortune selling a phony cancer-cure during the Depression and a black brother-and-sister combination that avoid being stereotypes (or predictable).

*** Jim Flanagan: *The Crossing,* Fawcett-Gold Medal, $2.50. Failing to prevent a society woman's suicide, an insurance salesman tries to find out why she did it. Most of the answers in this very well written if somewhat soap-operaish novel come in flashbacks, where the unusual but credible motive is grad-

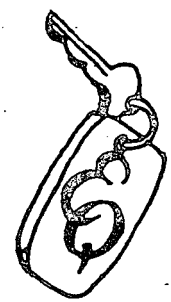
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ually unraveled. (Flanagan may be a pseudonym for one of the giants of the paperback-original crime novel, an author who usually produces a quite different type of tale.)

** L. A. Taylor: *Footnote to Murder,* Walker, $12.95. Marge Brock, middle-aged divorcee with three teenage children, is too squeamish to be an ideal candidate for her current (and well paying) job: researching unsolved murder cases for a true-crime writer.

There's some good writing and characterization here, but the main premise, Marge's discovery of two previously unconnected series of murders that both hit close to home, proves too unlikely for credibility.

© *1983 by Jon L. Breen.*



EDITOR'S NOTE

With this column, Jon L. Breen will discontinue reviewing books for The Jury Box. That's the bad news. The good news is that he will use the time he ordinarily would have devoted to writing it (and reading for it) to do more writing of his own—and he promises that will include more stories for *EQMM*. Jon inherited the book-review column from the inestimable John Dickson Carr in January 1977 and we're very grateful to him for his consistently fair and enlightening guidance.

See this space in the November issue for the announcement of Jon's successor, bringing to six the number of regular *EQMM* book reviewers, starting with Howard Haycraft's Speaking of Crime in the February 1946 issue.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NEXT ISSUE...

12 *NEW* stories—including
CELIA FREMLIN (about a summer holiday)
JAMES POWELL (about a meandering pearl)
JOHN F. SUTER (about Uncle Abner)
GEORGE BAXT (a Halloween story)
CLARK HOWARD (about a return to the OK Corral)
WILLIAM BANKIER (about a gunfight at the O'Shea Chorale)
EDWARD D. HOCH (about murder at the Bouchercon)
plus a distinguished reprint by
ANTHONY BOUCHER (about a design for dying)

ELEANOR SULLIVAN ..... *Editor*
KAREN A. PRINCE ..... *Associate Editor*
RALPH RUBINO ..... *Corporate Art Director*
GERARD HAWKINS ..... *Associate Art Director*
MARIANNE WELDON ..... *Associate Designer*
CARL BARTEE ..... *Director of Manufacturing*
CAROLE DIXON ..... *Production Manager*
MICHAEL DILLON ..... *Circulation Director, Retail Marketing*
RANDY SILVERMAN ..... *Circulation Manager, Subscription*
PAUL PEARSON ..... *Newsstand Operations Manager*
IRIS TEMPLE ..... *Director, Subsidiary Rights*
BARBARA BAZYN ..... *Permissions & Contracts Manager*
ROSE WAYNER ..... *Classified Advertising Director*
JAMIE FILLON ..... *Advertising Manager*
WILLIAM F. BATTISTA ..... *Advertising Director*

Advertising Sales Offices

NEW YORK	CHICAGO	LOS ANGELES
212-557-9100	312-346-0712	213-785-3114

JOEL DAVIS
President & Publisher

LEONARD F. PINTO
Vice President & General Manager

CAROLE DOLPH GROSS
Vice President Marketing & Editorial

LEONARD H. HABAS
Vice President Circulation

FRED EDINGER
Vice President Finance

Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, Vol. 82, No. 5, Whole No. 484, October, 1983. Published 13 times a year, every 28 days, by Davis Publications, Inc., at $1.75 a copy. Annual subscription $19.50 in U.S.A. and possessions; $23.00 elsewhere, payable in advance and in U.S. funds. Allow 6 to 8 weeks for change of address. Editorial and Executive Offices, 380 Lexington Ave., N.Y., N.Y. 10017. Subscription orders and mail regarding subscriptions should be sent to P.O.Box 1930, Marion, Ohio 43305. Second-class postage paid at New York, NY. and at additional mailing offices. Canadian third-class postage paid at Windsor, Ontario: second-class pending.

© 1983 Davis Publications, Inc., all rights reserved. Protection secured under the Universal Copyright Convention and the Pan American Copyright Convention. ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE® is the registered trademark of Ellery Queen. Printed in U.S.A. Submission must be accompanied by self-addressed stamped envelope. The Publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts.

POSTMASTER: Send form 3579 to Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, P.O. Box 1930, Marion, Ohio 43305. In Canada return to 628 Monmouth Rd., Windsor, Ontario N8Y3L1. ISSN: 0013-6328

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The crime in the story you are about to read is minimal, to be sure, but having read it, we couldn't resist sharing it with you . . .

MOURNER

by JOSEPH HANSEN

A few weeks after Briggs Nelson's mother was bolted inside a shiny metal coffin and buried in the dry, dust-bowl earth of the cemetery at Stander, South Dakota, a parade straggled up Main Street, trying to be gay. Rodeo horses reared and shied between the flat, sun-bleached faces of the buildings. The old tomato-red fire engine coughed. The Legion drum and bugle corps marched in powder-blue uniforms and nickel-plated helmets. Sweating aldermen waved from open Packards on which bunting flapped.

But all Briggs noticed were the Indians.

They wore beaded jackets, fringed leather pants, paint, feather bonnets, and bear-claw necklaces. The men straddled spotted ponies. Their squaws walked behind, round-faced, stoical, with eyes black and glassy as basalt, braids down their backs, and, one or two of the young ones, with papooses in slings. Briggs had seen Indians before. There were big reservations near Stander. He had watched Indians in many parades and remained reasonable.

But not this time.

This time he broke away from his father and ran along beside them. He ran block after block—not fast, of course, but at a steady trot—until his legs ached and his mouth was dry. He didn't yell out loud, but inside his chest, where his heart beat like a tom-tom, he was yelling all the time. And when the parade broke up, and the Indians disappeared into the armory, he sat down on the hot tin fender of a parked Model T and almost bawled. Which was unreasonable too, and unsettling, because he was eleven years old and never cried any more. He hadn't even cried when his mother died.

But he couldn't get the Indians off his mind.

The next morning he went to the public library and lugged home all the books about Indians he was allowed. And all afternoon, and

Copyright © 1979 by Joseph Hansen.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

after supper, and then late into the night in his hot, slope-ceilinged little room—while his father on the other side of the wall walked forlornly up and down in his stocking feet, creaking the floorboards—Briggs read of how the noble savages were tricked and sold out, decimated by the rifle bullet and the white man's diseases, and finally herded onto reservations in bitter and inhospitable lands, where they shivered, starved, and died.

What he read disturbed him. He wanted to do something, to get to the reservations somehow and to rouse the chiefs and braves, to set them on the warpath again, to avenge what had been done to them, to right their wrongs. But all he did in fact was to start a neighborhood enthusiasm for playing Indian. Along the alleys frequented by youngsters he knew, or in the scrubby clump of windbent oaks dying near the high school on the fringe of town, or farther out, in the abandoned gravel pit, bows and arrows displaced cap pistols. Pheasant feathers were rummaged out of cellar corners where they had blown the previous fall, when dads had brought home gunny sacks bulging with the big, limp birds, rainbow bright and full of buckshot. Headbands to hold the feathers were stitched by harassed mothers.

Mrs. Horst, the lady downstairs, sewed Briggs's. Realism was what he mainly sought in the games he contrived, pictorial realism. The farther off from home the games were played, the more nearly naked everybody got. But no one was burned at the stake or pinioned to the earth to be devoured by ants. Briggs didn't see the Indian that way.

Two other sad things had happened around the time Briggs's mother died. His father's shoe store had failed. And their new house had to be given back to the bank. After the funeral, the Nelson furniture had been moved into these four stuffy rooms on the top floor at Horst's, and Briggs's father had taken work—it was the Depression and jobs were scarce—traveling as a shirt salesman through the Dakotas, Montana, and Wyoming. He was able to return home nights when his trips didn't take him too far. When they did, he arranged for Briggs to stay with friends.

Twice he stayed with the Eameses, who had three kids, and twice with the Melgards who had two. But he wanted to stay with the Meisners because Mr. Lou Meisner was Sheriff of Stander County, and the Meisner house was over the jail. It was a big red-brick place that stood high on a mound of brown lawn that was like an enormous

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

grave. And in the basement, in the grave, were the cells. Briggs knew they were there but his mother had never permitted him to see them. He'd had to imagine them, as in the Buck Jones and Tim McCoy movies—grimy, black-barred, crowded with sulky gunslingers. And the sight of Sheriff Meisner, large and heavy-bellied, a big brown revolver strapped to his thick thigh, lent conviction to these imaginings.

So Briggs was pleased when, six or eight weeks after the parade, by which time he had exhausted the library's stock of Indian lore, and had been sunburned so brown that he doubted, hopefully, that he would ever bleach back to his normal Scandinavian pallor, his father sent him to spend a week at the Meisner's. At night he shared the bed of Johnny, who was his own age and whose principal merit, so far as Briggs was concerned, was that he talked very little. Briggs liked to talk, and since it was too hot to sleep, he lay in the dry darkness beside Johnny and lectured him about Indians. He talked fast and indignantly, so that it was some time before Johnny could interrupt. When he did, it was very quietly.

"Dad's got an Indian in jail," he said.

Briggs sat up. "Right now? You mean downstairs? Locked up?"

"Sure. Name's Charlie Two Horses." Johnny yawned and turned on his side. "I'll take you to see him tomorrow."

"But what's he in jail for?" Briggs was shocked that the genial Sheriff would treat one of his red brothers that way. "What did he do?"

"I don't know. But he's a good guy." Johnny's voice faded sleepily. "Knows a lot of great cowboy songs."

The jail surprised Briggs by being bright and clean. The pale-gray paint was fresh, the cell bars naked, gleaming steel. Except for Charlie Two Horses the place was empty. And, being below ground, it was a lot cooler and more comfortable than the house upstairs. Briggs leaned his face against the cold, shiny bars and stared worriedly and with pity at the prisoner in the cell.

He was a brown, underfed young man in dirty work clothes. His stiff hair needed combing and there was grime under his fingernails. Briggs supposed the narrow eyes and hawk nose looked savage, all right, but because of his grin, which showed teeth white as the porcelain toilet at the back of his cell, it was easy to forget that his father had likely scalped some soldier of Custer's. Seated on the bunk, Charlie hunched his shoulders and made his guitar jangle

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and twang as if it were alive with mice. He tilted his head back and shut his eyes, trying to think of a song to sing.

" 'Whuppy Ti Yi Yay,' Charlie," Johnny said.

Charlie kept his eyes shut for a second longer, hunting up the words and tune. Then he let out an experimental yup-yup, and began:

" 'As I was out walkin' one mornin' for pleasure—' "

Briggs had always agreed with his mother when she called this kind of music trashy. They had both preferred the Walter Damrosch symphony broadcasts and records like "The Two Grenadiers." But, listening to Charlie's easy, drawling voice, watching his hands on the strings, his foot tapping in its ragged tennis shoe, Briggs guessed there was something to be said for it, even for "Pretty Redwing."

Charlie slid the guitar under the bunk. "Okay, that's all the songs today, kids. Now, you do me a favor. I'm out of makin's." He pulled a greasy calfskin pouch out of his shirt and took a dime from it. "Can you catch, Briggs?"

"I can," Johnny said.

"He asked me," Briggs said. "Sure, Charlie."

"Right." Charlie flipped the coin, spinning, in a high arc. It cleared the bars neatly, but when Briggs grabbed for it he missed and knocked it rolling. It tinkled across the cement floor into the cell opposite and flattened out under the bunk inside.

"Some catcher," Johnny said.

"I'll get it." Briggs ran to the door of the empty cell and tugged. He felt his face turn red. "It's locked."

"That's all right," Charlie said. "Johnny knows where the keys are." He winked at the Sheriff's son.

"Sure." Beside the door to the upstairs stood a big rolltop desk. Johnny pulled open its central drawer and brought out a shiny key ring. "Keys are all numbered," he told Briggs, "to match the cell doors they fit. See, here's six." He fitted the large key into the large keyhole, turned it, and swung the door open on its oiled hinges.

"Let me get it." Briggs felt urgent about this. He dodged in and slid on his knees to reach the dime under the cot, then stood up with his heart beating hard and walked back to the door. "There's the dime," he said to Johnny. "Now lock it."

Johnny turned his freckled face half away and looked at Briggs out of the corners of his eyes. "What?"

Across from them, Charlie said, "Get out of there, Briggs. If Johnny's dad come and found you in there, he'd be sore."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You don't have to really lock it," Briggs pleaded. "Just shut the door. Only for a minute. I just want to see what it's like to be—locked up underground. Please."

"You're crazy," Johnny said. "Come on, I've got to put the keys back."

Briggs felt like yelling at him, but his father had told him to be polite because the Meisners were doing him a kindness, having him stay, so he came out. But, standing, staring into the empty cell, while Johnny locked the door and put the keys away, Briggs ached in his chest. Behind him, Johnny's voice had a lost, sad sound, echoing off the bare walls, asking Charlie:

"Bill Durham?"

"Yeah, and get it back here, will you? I'm clean out. Musta smoked all night." He flapped an empty sack at them, a scrap of soiled cloth with a black paper label. "So don't horse around, huh?"

"We won't." Johnny ran to the barred door that shut the jail off from the upstairs. He halted. "Come on, Briggs. What the heck's wrong with you?"

Briggs sighed. "Let's go."

When they came back, Charlie was asleep, sprawled face down on his bunk, the back of his shirt dark with sweat.

"Watch me wake him up," Johnny said, and raised the pudgy new tobacco sack to throw it.

Briggs caught his arm. "Don't. What do you want to wake him up for? He was awake all night. He was suffering. It's wrong to lock Indians up. They get sick and die, longing for the sky and the prairie."

Johnny looked at him sideways again. But he didn't throw the bag of Bull Durham. He laid it quietly on the crossbar of Charlie's cell door. Then they went upstairs and hung the key to the jail door on the hook at the top.

Briggs took the key down again in the middle of the night. Barefoot, pajamaed, he groped after it in the dark. It was pretty high up and his fingers trembled and were slippery with sweat, so the key refused to unhook itself at first. But finally he got it. His knees acted wobbly and he kept hold of the railing going down the cold stairs to the jail. The stairway jogged. He halted. Below, a light showed. He stood for a long time, heart banging, and wondered about that light. But he seemed to recall from some movie that prisoners were

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

often kept lighted at night. So he went on down the rest of the steps, but very cautiously, as if there were broken glass on each one.

At the bottom, he squinted between the bars of the door. The jail looked grim at night. The light fell bleakly from a caged bulb in the ceiling. He couldn't see Charlie Two Horses but he could hear him breathe. He pushed the key into the lock. It turned noisily and the hard walls rattled back its noise. He flinched, but no one seemed to have heard. He swung the door out, went quickly to the desk for the key ring, ran with it to Charlie's cell, fumbled for the number five key, and opened the door.

Charlie ought to have been sitting miserable on his bunk, smoking, and yearning with vacant, haunted eyes for the great outdoors, or maybe pacing restlessly, like a caged coyote. Instead, he was asleep, on his back this time, arms flung out, mouth slack. He slept as if there were an arrow through him, as if he were dead.

"Charlie." The name came out weakly because Briggs felt small and scared suddenly, which shamed him. "Charlie," he said again, louder, but still from the doorway. The Indian only sighed. It wouldn't work. Briggs would have to move. He forced himself to cross the cell to the bunk. "Wake up, Charlie. Come on, wake up." Briggs was suddenly annoyed. He grabbed the Indian's shoulder and shook it. "Come on. You can get out now. You can get out."

"Huh?" Charlie opened his eyes and stared. Then he sat up so fast he nearly knocked Briggs over. "What the hell are you doing here?"

"I came to let you out. Look, the door's open. Both doors. You can leave, Charlie. You have to go quiet through the house, but you can leave. Everybody's asleep."

"You crazy kid," Charlie said, "you'll get in bad trouble." But just the same, he got off the bunk and walked, in his sleep-twisted shirt and pants, to the door. He swung it a little, maybe just to show himself it was really open. "Bad trouble," he repeated, only this time he was absent-minded about the meaning and he grinned to himself. "Jeez." He wiped his hand down over his face, walked into the open area between the cells, turned around twice, came back and looked at Briggs. He shook his head and laughed. "You're a crazy kid, but you're all right. All right." He squeezed Briggs's shoulder, then pulled his shoes and guitar from under the bunk. "Come on, let's go."

"No, I'm staying here." Briggs held out the key ring to the Indian. "Here. Lock me in."

"What? Listen, kid, forget that." Sweat shone on Charlie's fore-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

head. "Come on. We've got to get out of here before the Sheriff comes down." He moved to the door.

"No," Briggs said. "I'm staying. Lock it up, Charlie. And here's the key to the door down there. It hangs on a hook at the top of the stairs. Put it back."

"Look, come on, Briggs," Charlie pleaded. "This ain't no game." He kept moving out of the cell and coming back while he talked. "No time for horsin' around. You're going to do this kind of thing, you can't play games."

"I'm not," Briggs said. "I want to stay here. I'm breaking the law anyway. Besides, Charlie, a white man doesn't mind. Red men mind jail. But a white man doesn't. Anyway, not so much."

"Oh?" Charlie stopped moving and blinked thoughtfully at Briggs for a moment. Then he shrugged. "Okay, okay, kid. Thanks." And he locked the door while Briggs stood inside.

"Goodbye, Charlie," Briggs said.

"So long, kid." The Indian dropped the key ring on top of the desk and he didn't bother to lock the stairway door. But that didn't matter a lot. Briggs went to the bunk that was still warm from Charlie's sleep. He lay down. The light glared in his eyes, and his heart was pounding so from excitement that he thought he never would, but after a long time he did fall asleep.

Mrs. Meisner found him there at six the next morning when she came down with the prisoner's breakfast on a tray. "Briggs Nelson!" she gasped. "Briggs Nelson!" Her bony face got red as a chicken's. She squawked like a chicken. She flapped to the stair door. "Lou, you better get on down here, right now!"

The Sheriff came, buckling on his gunbelt around his nightshirt. He was still nine-tenths asleep, and when his spindly wife pointed at the cell where Briggs stood in his pajamas, all he could manage at first was a grunt. The rest of the Meisners came down behind him, wide-eyed girls in pale flannel bathrobes and with curl-papers in their hair, and last of all Johnny, looking white under his freckles.

"What the hell?" the Sheriff finally managed to choke out. He clattered the key ring and scraped four or five keys around on the steel plate of the lock until he got the right one at last and could pull the door open and yank Briggs out. "What in all consolidated hell you done? Where's the Indian?"

"Gone," Briggs said loudly. "Back to the wide prairies and the open skies."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It wasn't a hard speech to make. He had practiced it. But he hadn't practiced any other speeches, so that when the Sheriff and his wife sat him down upstairs in the rollershade-darkened parlor and asked him questions about why he had set Charlie Two Horses free, and what kind of a way was this to act in somebody else's house, and what would his father say—he couldn't answer.

Somehow, they got his father back. He looked pale to Briggs, and strange, standing beside the big, sunburned Sheriff, apologizing in his thin, quiet voice. The Sheriff seemed ready to laugh about what had happened now. But Briggs's father never laughed any more. The best he could manage was a wan, crooked little smile.

"All right, Lou, if you say so, we'll forget it. You understand—it's just that he's—well, losing his mother, her being gone, he—"

"Sure, Henry, I know," the Sheriff said. "But I have to answer to the County. Oh, hell, I can get Charlie Two Horses back easy enough. That's not it. He'll be drunk someplace by sundown. Just pick him up and dump him in the car. But supposing it'd been some killer, for instance."

"I understand, Lou." Briggs's father nodded tiredly. "Anyway, thanks." The two men shook hands and then stared at Briggs. His father sighed and tried the smile again that didn't work. "All right, son. Got your suitcase?"

And they went.

"What we'll do," his father said that night, "is go to Minneapolis. To your Aunt Christine's. All right with you? Nothing left for us here—not even the car now. When I got back today, after Lou called me, Reardon's had a man waiting. See, it wasn't quite paid for. God knows what good it will do them. Can't sell anybody a car today. Anyway, I sure can't travel for Hi-Style without it. There'll be a better job for me in Minneapolis. Well, some kind of job. Anyway, there'll be a home for you, with a woman in it. You like your Aunt Christine."

"Sure," Briggs said.

"If we sell the furniture," his father said, "we'll have enough for train fare to Minneapolis, and some left over to keep us till I get work."

After the furniture was gone, they didn't linger in the blank, brown-papered rooms above Horst's. They carried their suitcases through the rusty iron gates of the cemetery and up the long, curving

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cinder drive inside. They stood side by side staring down at the dry-grass-covered mound that was his mother's grave, and then his father cleared his throat and said:

"We can come back to her, come back to Stander sometime. Things won't always be this bad. Minneapolis isn't so far away. We can come to visit."

Briggs had never ridden on a train before. But it wasn't exciting. There was nothing to look at except flat land that the sun was burning up and from which the wind was all the time raking the topsoil. Dead cows lay in the fields, bloated sometimes, sometimes only skeletons. Farmhouses stood vacant, windows and doors boarded up, paint peeling. Barns leaned with the wind. Silos had fallen over.

The wheels of the train made sounds as if they were biting off sections of rail in even lengths and spitting them out. But all they were really doing, of course, was rolling, carrying him farther and farther from the dead grass on the mound in the cemetery, the shiny metal coffin down under it, away down, his mother lying prim and strange on her back inside. Briggs looked at his father.

"Some Indians," he said, "bury their dead at the tops of trees."

Then, for some reason, he cried.

"Q"

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO SUBSCRIBERS

All subscription orders and mail regarding subscriptions, including change of address, should be sent to P.O. Box 1930, Marion, Ohio 43305.

For change of address, please advise 6 to 8 weeks before moving. Send your current mailing label with new address.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* short story by

SIMON BRETT

first publication in the United States

"Don't you see, I hate people!" Partridge told Sergeant Wallace. The confession was costing him a lot, but he was too wound up to stop its outpouring. "People are always trying to find out about you, to probe, to know you. They want to invade your house, take you out for drinks, invade your privacy. I can't stand it!"

Within a single story, Simon Brett's contrasts and conflicts can evoke both laughter and the very depths of pathos . . .

HOW'S YOUR MOTHER?

by SIMON BRETT

"It's all right, Mother. Just the postman," Humphrey Partridge called up the stairs, recognizing the uniformed bulk behind the frosted glass of the front door.

"Parcel for you, Mr. Partridge."

As he handed it over, Reg Carter, the postman, leant one arm against the doorframe in his chatting position. "From some nurseries, it says on the label."

"Yes—"

"Bulbs, by the feel of it."

"Yes." Humphrey Partridge's hand remained on the door as if about to close it, but the postman didn't seem to notice the hint.

"Right time of year for planting bulbs, isn't it? November."

"Yes."

Again Reg was impervious to the curtness of the monosyllable. "How's your mother?" he asked chattily.

© *Simon Brett 1980, first published in* The Mystery Guild Anthology, *London, 1980.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Partridge softened. "Not so bad. You know—considering."

"Never seem to bring any letters for her, do I?"

"No. Well, when you get to that age, most of your friends have gone."

"Suppose so. How old is she now?"

"Eighty-six last July."

"That's a good age. Doesn't get about much?"

"No, hardly at all. Now if you'll excuse me, I do have to leave to catch my train."

Humphrey Partridge just restrained himself from slamming the door on the postman. Then he put his scarf round his neck, crossed the ends across his chest and held them in position with his chin while he slipped on his raincoat with the fleecy lining buttoned in. He picked up his briefcase and called up the stairs, "Bye, Mother! Off to work now. Be home the usual time!"

In the village post office, Mrs. Denton watched the closing door with disapproval and shrugged her shawl righteously around her. "Don't like that Jones woman. Coming in for *The Times* every morning. Very lah-di-dah. Seems shifty to me. Wouldn't be surprised if there was something going on there."

"Maybe." Her husband didn't look up from his morbid perusal of the *Daily Mirror*. "Nasty business, this, about the woman and the R.A.F. bloke."

"The Red Scarf Case," Mrs. Denton italicized avidly.

"Hmmm. They say when the body was found—" He broke off as Humphrey Partridge came in for his *Telegraph*. "Morning. How's the old lady?"

"Oh, not too bad, thank you. Considering."

Mrs. Denton gathered her arms under her bosom. "Oh, Mr. Partridge—the vicar was in yesterday, asked me if I'd ask you. There's a jumble sale in the Institute tomorrow and he was looking for some able-bodied helpers just to shift a few—"

"Ah, I'm sorry, Mrs. Denton, I don't like to leave my mother at weekends. She's alone enough with me being at work all week."

"It wouldn't be for long. It's just—"

"I'm sorry. Now I must dash or I'll miss my train."

They let the silence stand for a moment after the shop door shut. Then Mr. Denton spoke, without raising his eyes from his paper. "Lives for his mother, that one."

"Worse things to live for."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Oh, yes. Still, it doesn't seem natural in a grown man."

"Shouldn't think it'd last long. Old girl must be on the way out. Been bedridden ever since they moved here. And how long ago's that? Three years?"

"Three. Four."

"Don't know what he'll do when she goes."

"Move, maybe. George in the grocer said something about him talking of emigrating to Canada if only he hadn't got the old girl to worry about."

"I expect he'll come into some money when she goes." When Mrs. Denton expected something, it soon became fact in the village.

Humphrey Partridge straightened the ledgers on his desk, confident that the sales figures were all entered and his day's work was done. He stole a look at his watch. Five twenty-five. Nearly time to put his coat on and—

The phone rang. Damn. Why on earth did people ring up at such inconvenient times? "Partridge," he snapped into the receiver.

"Hello, it's Sylvia in Mr. Brownlow's office. He wondered if you could just pop along for a quick word."

"What? Now? I was about to leave. —Oh, very well, Miss Simpson. If it's urgent."

Mr. Brownlow looked up over his half-glasses as Partridge entered. "Humphrey, take a pew."

Partridge sat on the edge of the indicated chair, poised for speedy departure.

"Minor crisis blown up," said Brownlow languidly. "Did you know I was meant to be going to Antwerp next week for the conference?"

"Yes."

"Just had a telex from Parsons in Rome. Poor sod's gone down with some virus and is stuck in an Eyetie hospital, heaven help him. Means I'll have to go out to Rome tomorrow and pick up the pieces of the contract. So there's no chance of my making Antwerp on Monday."

"Oh, dear."

"Yes, it's a bugger. But we've got to have someone out there. It's an important conference. Someone should be there waving the flag for Brownlow and Potter."

"Surely Mr. Potter will go."

"No, he's too tied up here."

"Evans?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"On leave next week. Had it booked for yonks. No, Partridge, you're the only person who's free to go."

"But I'm very busy this time of year!"

"Only routine. One of the juniors can keep it ticking over."

"But surely it should be someone whose standing in the company—"

"Your standing's fine. Be good experience. It's about time you took some more executive responsibility. There's bound to be a bit of a reshuffle when Potter retires and you're pretty senior on length of service . . . Take that as read then, shall we? I'll get Sylvia to transfer the tickets and hotel and—"

"No, Mr. Brownlow. You see, it's rather difficult."

"What's the problem?"

"It's my mother. She's very old and I look after her, you know."

"Oh, come on, it's only three days, Partridge."

"But she's very unwell at the moment."

"She always seems to be very unwell."

"Yes, but this time I think it's . . . I mean I'd never forgive myself if . . . "

"But this is important for the company. And Antwerp's not the end of the earth. If something happened, you could leap onto a plane and be back in a few hours."

"I'm sorry. It's impossible. My mother . . . "

Mr. Brownlow sat back in his high swivel chair and toyed with a paper knife. "You realize this would mean I'd have to send someone junior to you . . . "

"Yes."

"And it's the sort of thing that might stick in people's minds if there were a question of promotion or . . . "

"Yes."

"Yes. Well, that's it." Those who knew Mr. Brownlow well would have realized that he was extremely annoyed. "I'd better not detain you any longer or I'll make you late for your train."

Partridge looked gratefully at his watch as he rose. "No, if I really rush I'll just make it."

"Oh, terrific," said Mr. Brownlow, but his sarcasm was wasted on Partridge's departing back.

"Mother, I'm home! Six thirty-five on the dot. Had to run for the train, but I just made it. I'll come on up!"

Humphrey Partridge bounded up the stairs, went past his own

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bedroom, and stood in the doorway of the second bedroom. There was a smile of triumph on his lips as he looked at the empty bed.

Partridge put two slices of bread into his toaster. He had had the toaster a long time and it still worked perfectly. Better than one of those modern pop-up ones. Silly, gimmicky things.

He looked out of the kitchen window with satisfaction. He felt a bit stiff, but it had been worth it. The earth of the borders had all been neatly turned over. And all the bulbs planted. He smiled.

The doorbell rang. As he went to answer it, he looked at his watch. Hmm, have to get his skates on or he'd miss the train. Always more difficult to summon up the energy on Monday mornings.

It was Reg Carter, the postman. "Sorry, I couldn't get these through the letter box." But there was no apology in his tone—no doubt he saw this as another opportunity for one of his interminable chats.

Partridge could recognize that the oversize package was more brochures and details about Canada. He would enjoy reading those on the train. He restrained the impulse to snatch them out of the postman's hand.

"Oh, and there was this letter, too."

"Thank you."

Still, the postman didn't hand them over. "Nothing for the old lady today neither."

"No, as I said last week, she doesn't expect many letters."

"No. She all right, is she?"

"Fine, thank you." The postman still seemed inclined to linger, so Partridge continued, "I'm sorry, I'm in rather a hurry. I have to leave for work in a moment."

The next thing Reg Carter knew, the package and letter were no longer in his hands and the door was shut in his face.

Inside, Humphrey Partridge put the unopened brochures into his briefcase and slid his finger along the top of the other envelope. As he looked at its contents, he froze, then sat down at the foot of the stairs, weak with shock. Out loud he cried, "This is it. Oh, Mother, this is it!"

Then he looked at his watch, gathered up his briefcase, scarf, and coat, and hurried out of the house.

"There's more about that Red Scarf Case in *The Sun*" said Mr. Denton with gloomy relish.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It all comes out at the trial. Always does," his wife observed sagely.

"Says here he took her out onto the golf links to look at the moon. Look at the moon—huh!"

"I wouldn't be taken in by something like that, Maurice. Serves her right in a way. Mind you, he must have been a psychoparth. Sergeant Wallace says nine cases out of ten—"

Partridge entered breezily. "*Telegraph,* please. Oh, and a local paper, please."

"Local paper?" Mrs. Denton, starved of variety, pounced on this departure from the norm.

"Yes, I just want a list of local estate agents."

"Thinking of buying somewhere else?"

"Maybe not buying," said Partridge, coyly enigmatic.

He didn't volunteer any more, so Mr. Denton took up the conversation with his habitual originality. "Getting colder, isn't it?"

Partridge agreed that it was.

Mrs. Denton added her contribution. "It'll get a lot colder yet."

"I'm sure it will," Partridge agreed. And then he couldn't resist saying, "Though with a bit of luck I won't be here to feel it."

"You are thinking of moving then?"

"Maybe. Maybe." And Humphrey Partridge left the shop with his newspapers, unwontedly frisky.

"I think," pronounced Mrs. Denton, focusing her malevolence, "there's something going on there."

"You wanted to see me, Partridge?"

"Yes, Mr. Brownlow."

"Well, make it snappy. I've just flown back from Rome. As it turns out, I could have made the Antwerp conference. Still, it's giving young Dyett a chance to win his spurs. What was it you wanted, Partridge?" Mr. Brownlow stifled a yawn.

"I've come to give in my notice."

"You mean you want to leave?"

"Yes."

"This is rather unexpected."

"Yes, Mr. Brownlow."

"I see." Mr. Brownlow swiveled his chair in irritation. "Have you had an offer from another company?"

"No."

"No, I hardly thought . . . "

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I'm going abroad. With my mother."

"Of course. May one ask where?"

"Canada."

"Ah. Reputed to be a land of opportunity. Are you starting a new career out there?"

"I don't know. I may not work."

"Oh, come into money, have we?" But he received no answer to the question. "O.K., if you'd rather not say, that's your business. I won't inquire further. Well, I hope you know what you're doing. I'll need a month's notice in writing."

"Is it possible for me to go sooner?"

"A month's notice is customary." Mr. Brownlow's temper suddenly gave. "No, sod it, I don't want people here unwillingly! Just go! Go today!"

"Thank you."

"Of course, we do usually give a farewell party to departing staff, but in your case . . . "

"It won't be necessary."

"Too bloody right it won't be necessary!" Mr. Brownlow's eyes blazed. "Get out!"

Partridge got home just before lunch in high spirits. Shamelessly using Brownlow and Potter's telephones for private calls, he had rung an estate agent to put his house on the market and made positive inquiries of the Canadian High Commission about emigration. He burst through the front door and called out his customary, "Hello, Mother! I'm home!"

The words died on his lips as he saw Reg Carter emerging from his kitchen. "Good God, what are *you* doing here? This is private property."

"I was doing my rounds with the second post."

"How did you get in?"

"I had to break a window."

"You had no right. That's breaking and entering. I'll call the police."

"It's all right. I've already called them. I've explained it all to Sergeant Wallace."

Partridge's face was the color of putty. "Explained what?" he croaked.

"About the fire." Then again, patiently, because Partridge didn't seem to be taking it in, "The fire. There was a fire. In your kitchen.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I saw the smoke as I came past. You'd left the toaster on this morning. It had got the tea towel, and the curtains were just beginning to go. So I broke in."

Partridge now looked human again. "I understand. I'm sorry I was so suspicious. It's just . . . Thank you."

"Don't mention it," said Reg Carter with insouciance he'd learned from some television hero. "It was just I thought, what with your mother upstairs I couldn't afford to wait and call the fire brigade. What with her not being able to move and all."

"That was very thoughtful. Thank you." Unconsciously Partridge was edging round the hall, as if trying to usher the postman out. But Reg Carter stayed firmly in the kitchen doorway. Partridge reached vaguely toward his wallet. "I feel I should reward you in some way . . . "

"No, I don't want no reward. I just did it to save the old lady."

Partridge gave a little smile and nervous nod of gratitude.

"I mean, it would be awful for her to be trapped. Someone helpless like that."

"Yes."

Up until this point the postman's tone had been tentative, but as he continued he became more forceful. "After I'd put the fire out, I thought I ought to see if she was all right. She might have smelt burning or heard me breaking in and been scared out of her wits . . . So I called up the stairs to her. She didn't answer."

The color was once again dying rapidly from Partridge's face. "No, she's very deaf. She wouldn't hear you."

"No. So I went upstairs," Reg Carter continued inexorably. "All the doors were closed. I opened one. I reckon it must be your room. Then I opened another. There was a bed there. But there was no one in it."

"No."

"There was no one in the bathroom. Or anywhere. The house was empty."

"Yes."

The postman looked for a moment at his quarry, then said, "I thought that was rather strange, Mr. Partridge. I mean, you told us all your mother was bedridden and lived here."

"She does—I mean she did." The color was back in his cheeks in angry blushes.

"Did?"

"Yes. She died," said Partridge quickly.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Died? When? You said this morning when I asked after her that—"

"She died a couple of days ago. I'm sorry, I've been in such a state. The shock, you know. You can't believe that it's happened and—"

"When was the funeral?"

A new light of confusion came into Partridge's eyes as he stumbled to answer. "Yesterday. Very recently. It's only just happened. I'm sorry, I'm not thinking straight. I don't know whether I'm coming or going."

"No." Reg Carter's voice was studiously devoid of intonation. "I'd better be on my way. Got a couple more letters to deliver, then back to the post office."

Humphrey Partridge mumbled more thanks as he ushered the postman out of the front door. When he heard the click of the front gate, he sank trembling onto the bottom stair and cried out loud, "Why, why can't they leave us alone?"

Sergeant Wallace was a fat man with a thin, tidy mind. He liked everything in its place and he liked to put it there himself. The one thing that frightened him was the idea of anyone else being brought in to what he regarded as his area of authority—in other words, anything that happened in the village. So it was natural for him, when the rumors about Humphrey Partridge reached unmanageable proportions, to go and see the man himself rather than reporting to his superiors.

It was about a week after the fire. Needless to say, Reg Carter had talked to Mr. and Mrs. Denton and they had talked to practically everyone who came into the post office. The talk was now so wild that something had to be done.

Humphrey Partridge opened his front door with customary lack of welcome, but Sergeant Wallace forced his large bulk inside, saying he'd come to talk about the fire.

Tea chests in the sitting room told their own story. "Packing your books, I see, Mr. Partridge."

"Yes. Most of my effects will be going to Canada by sea." Partridge assumed, rightly, that the entire village knew of his impending departure.

"When is it exactly you're off?"

"About a month. I'm not exactly sure."

Sergeant Wallace settled his uninvited mass into an armchair. "Nice place, Canada, I hear. My nephew's over there."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Ah."

"You'll be buying a place to live . . . ?"

"Yes."

"On your own?"

"Yes."

"Your mother's no longer with you?"

"No. She . . . she died."

"Yes. Quite recently, I hear." Sergeant Wallace stretched out, as if warming himself in front of the empty grate. "It was to some extent about your mother that I called."

Partridge didn't react, so the sergeant continued. "As you know, this is a small place and most people take an interest in other people's affairs . . . "

"Can't mind their own bloody business, most of them."

"Maybe so. Now I don't listen to gossip, but I do have to keep my ear to the ground—that's what the job's about. And I'm afraid I've been hearing some strange things about you recently, Mr. Partridge." Sergeant Wallace luxuriated in another pause. "People are saying things about your mother's death. I realize, being so recent, you'd probably rather not talk about it."

"Fat chance I have of that. Already I'm getting anonymous letters and phone calls about it."

"And you haven't reported them?"

"Look, I'll be away soon. And none of it will matter."

"Hmm." The sergeant decided the moment had come to take the bull by the horns. "As you'll probably know from these letters and telephone calls then, people are saying you killed your mother for her money."

"That is libelous nonsense!"

"Maybe. I hope so. If you can just answer a couple of questions for me, then I'll know so. Tell me first—when did your mother die?"

"Ten days ago. The eleventh."

"Are you sure? It was on the eleventh that you had the fire and Reg Carter found the house empty."

"I'm sorry. A couple of days before that. It's been such a shock, I . . . "

"Of course." Sergeant Wallace nodded soothingly. "And so the funeral must have been on the tenth?"

"Some time around then, yes."

"Strange that none of the local undertakers had a call from you."

"I used a firm from town, one I have connections with."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I see." Sergeant Wallace looked rosier than ever as he warmed to his task. "And no doubt it was a doctor from town who issued the death certificate?"

"Yes."

"Do you happen to have a copy of that certificate?" the sergeant asked sweetly.

Humphrey Partridge looked weakly at his tormentor and murmured, "You know I don't."

"If there isn't a death certificate," mused Sergeant Wallace agonizingly slowly, "then that suggests there might be something unusual about your mother's death."

"Damn you! Damn you all!" Partridge was almost sobbing with passion. "Why can't you leave me alone? Why are you always prying?"

The sergeant recovered from his surprise. "Mr. Partridge, if a crime's been committed—"

"No crime's been committed!" Partridge shouted in desperate exasperation. "I haven't got a mother! I never saw my mother! She walked out on me when I was six months old and I was brought up in care!"

"Then who was living upstairs?" asked Sergeant Wallace logically.

"Nobody! I live on my own—I've always lived on my own! Don't you see, I hate people!" The confession was costing Partridge a lot, but he was too wound up to stop its outpouring. "People are always trying to find out about you, to probe, to know you. They want to invade your house, take you out for drinks, invade your privacy. I can't stand it! I just want to be on my own!"

Sergeant Wallace tried to interject, but Partridge steamrollered on. "But you can't be alone. People won't let you. You have to have a reason. So I invented my mother. I couldn't do things, I couldn't see people, because I had to get back to my mother. She was ill. And my life worked very well like that. I even began to believe in her, to talk to her. She never asked questions, she didn't want to know anything about me, she just loved me and was kind and beautiful. And I loved her. I wouldn't kill her—I wouldn't lay a finger on her. It's you, all of you who've killed her!" He was now weeping uncontrollably. "Damn you, damn you."

Sergeant Wallace took a moment or two to organize this new information in his mind. "So what you're telling me is there never was any mother. You made her up. You couldn't have killed her, because she never lived."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Yes," said Partridge petulantly. "Can't you get that through your thick skull?"

"Hmm. And how do you explain that you suddenly have enough money to emigrate and buy property in Canada?"

"My premium bond came up. I got the letter on the morning of the fire. That's why I forgot to turn the toaster off. I was so excited."

"I see." Sergeant Wallace lifted himself ponderously out of his chair and moved across to the window. "Been digging in the garden, I see."

"Yes, I put some bulbs in."

"Bulbs, and you're about to move." The sergeant looked at his quarry. "That's very public-spirited of you, Mr. Partridge."

The post office was delighted with the news of Partridge's arrest. Mrs. Denton was firmly of the opinion that she had thought there was something funny going on and recognized Partridge's homicidal tendencies. Reg Carter bathed in the limelight of having set the investigation in motion, and Sergeant Wallace, though he regretted the intrusion of the C.I.D. into his patch, felt a certain satisfaction for his vital groundwork.

The Dentons were certain Reg would be called as a witness at the trial and thought there was a strong possibility that they might be called as character witnesses. Mrs. Denton bitterly regretted the demise of the death penalty, feeling that prison was too good for people who strangled old ladies in their beds. Every passing shopper brought news of developments in the case, how the police had dug up the garden, how they had taken up the floorboards, how they had been heard tapping the walls of Partridge's house. Mrs. Denton recommended that they should sift through the ashes of the boiler.

So great was the community interest in the murder that the cries of disbelief and disappointment were huge when the news came through that the charges against Partridge had been dropped. The people of the village felt that they had been robbed of a pleasure which, by any scale of values, was rightfully theirs.

But as the details seeped out, it was understood that Partridge's wild tale to Sergeant Wallace was true. There had been no one else living in the house. He had had a large premium bond win. And the last record of Partridge's real mother dated from four years previously when she had been found guilty of soliciting in Liverpool and sentenced to two months in prison.

The village's brief starring role in the national press was over and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

its people, disgruntled and cheated, returned to more domestic scandals. Humphrey Partridge came back to his house, but no one saw him much as he hurried to catch up on the delay of his emigration plans which his wrongful arrest had caused him.

It was two days before his departure, in the early evening, when he had the visitor. It was December, dark and cold. Everyone in the village was indoors.

He did not recognize the woman standing on the doorstep. She was dressed in a short black-and-white fun-fur coat which might have been fashionable five years before. Her hair was fierce ginger, a strident contrast to scarlet lipstick, and black lashes hovered over her eyes like bats' wings. The stringiness of her neck and the irregular bumps of veins under her black stockings denied the evidence of her youthful dress.

"Hello, Humphrey," she said.

"Who are you?" He held the door, as usual, ready to close it.

The woman laughed, a short, unpleasant sound. "No, I don't expect you to recognize me. You were a bit small when we last met."

"You're not . . . ?"

"Yes, of course I am. Aren't you going to give your mother a kiss?"

She thrust forward her painted face and Partridge recoiled back into the hall. The woman took the opportunity to follow him in and shut the front door behind her.

"Nice little place you've got for yourself, Humphrey." She advanced and Partridge backed away from her into the sitting room. She took in the bareness and the packing cases. "Oh, yes, of course—leaving these shores, aren't you? I read in the paper. Canada, was it? Nice people, Canadians are. At least, their sailors are." Another burst of raucous laughter.

"'Cause of course you've got the money now, haven't you, Humphrey? I read about that, too. Funny, I never met anyone before what'd won a premium bond. Plenty who did all right on the horses, but not premium bonds."

"What do you want?" Partridge croaked.

"Just come to see my little boy, haven't I? Just thinking, now you're set up so nice and cosy, maybe you ought to help your mum in her old age."

"I don't owe you anything. You never did anything for me. You walked out on me."

"Ah, that was ages ago. And he was a nice boy, Clinton. I had to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have a fling. I meant to come back to you after a week or two. But then the council moved in and Clinton got moved away and—"

"What do you want?"

"I told you. I want to be looked after in my old age. I read in the paper about how devoted you were to your old mother." Again the laugh.

"But you aren't my mother." Partridge was speaking with great care and restraint.

"Oh, yes I am, Humphrey."

"You're not."

"Yes. Ooh, I've had a thought—why don't you take your old mother to Canada with you?"

"You are not my mother!" Partridge's hands were on the woman's shoulders, shaking out the emphasis of his words.

"I'm your mother, Humphrey."

His hands rose to her neck to silence the taunting words. They tightened and shuddered as he spoke. "My mother is beautiful and kind. She is nothing like you. She always loved me. She still loves me!"

The spasm passed. He released his grip. The woman's body slipped down. As her head rolled back, her false teeth fell out with a clatter onto the floor.

Sergeant Wallace appeared to be very busy with a ledger when Humphrey Partridge went into the police station next morning. He was embarrassed by what had happened. It didn't fit inside the neat borders of his mind and it made him look inefficient. But eventually he could pretend to be busy no longer. "Good morning, Mr. Partridge. What can I do for you?"

"I leave for Canada tomorrow."

"Oh. Well, may I wish you every good fortune in your new life there."

"Thank you." A meager smile was on Partridge's lips. "Sergeant, about my mother . . . "

Sergeant Wallace closed his ledger with some force. "Listen, Mr. Partridge, you have already had a full apology and—"

"No, no, it's nothing to do with that. I just wanted to tell you . . . "

"Yes?"

" . . . that I *did* kill my mother."

"Oh, yes, and then I suppose you buried her in the garden, eh?"

"Yes, I did."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Fine." Sergeant Wallace reopened his ledger and looked down at the page busily.

"I'm confessing to murder," Partridge insisted.

The sergeant looked up with an exasperated sigh. "Listen, Mr. Partridge, I'm very sorry about what happened and you're entitled to your little joke, but I do have other things to do, so if you wouldn't mind . . . "

"You mean I can just go?"

"Please."

"To Canada?"

"To where you bloody well like."

"Right then, I'll go. And . . . er . . . leave the old folks at home."

Sergeant Wallace didn't look up from his ledger as Partridge left the police station.

Outside, Humphrey Partridge took a deep breath of air, smiled, and said out loud, "Right, Mother, Canada it is."

DID YOU MISS A KEY ISSUE?

BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE

ELLERY QUEEN

LAST CHANCE TO UNLOCK MORE MYSTERIES IN ELLERY QUEEN
CHECK OFF TODAY THE ELLERY QUEEN BACK ISSUES THAT YOU'D LIKE, AND MAIL WITH YOUR CHECK OR MONEY ORDER. ORDERS TAKEN ON FIRST-COME, FIRST-SERVED BASIS. HURRY! LIMITED SUPPLY AVAILABLE.

ISSUES

- ☐ Jan. 1, 1982 $3.50
- ☐ Jan. 27, 1982 $3.50
- ☐ Feb. 24, 1982 $3.50
- ☐ Mar. 24, 1982 $3.50
- ☐ May 24, 1982 $3.50
- ☐ Jun. 24, 1982 $3.50
- ☐ Jul. 24, 1982 $3.50
- ☐ Mid Jul. 24, 1982 $3.50
- ☐ Aug. 24, 1982 $3.50
- ☐ Sep. 24, 1982 $3.50

MAIL TO

ELLERY QUEEN
P.O. Box 999
Ridgefield, N.J.
07657

☐ Enclosed is check or money order for $_____
(Cost includes postage and handling)
Make checks payable to ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

Name

Street/No.

City State Zip

Please allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery

4/10

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A friendly and painstaking warning from one who knows . . .

WATCH YOURSELF AT ALL TIMES

by CLEMENTS JORDAN

There are few people who have better cause to understand the perils of "little old ladies" who live alone than I. Now, I know you're not going prowling alone in the dark byways at any hour and you don't carry sizable amounts of cash when you shop, or act carelessly with keys or with wallets containing credit cards. You don't leave doors, windows, or cars unlocked. Nobody has to tell you about muggers and robbers. Of course not.

Your phone is probably unlisted. You've given the number to only a chosen few, cautioning them to call you only at certain hours and let the phone ring X number of times, hang up, dial again, and let it ring another X number of times.

But—do you leave your phone number on the phone itself? Oh, I hope not! Who can tell what meter-reader, repairman, or maid might see it and pass it on so that some awful night, half asleep and unwary, you answer and there is that someone who will know you're alone and not be fooled by your saying, "Hold on a moment while I get my husband." No, he'll hang up and come right over—on the one night all the neighbors are away! He'll cut the phone wires, force open the door, and then—

There are pitfalls you simply are unlikely to believe, so please, let me advise you. Stay home whenever you can. But of course there are the unavoidable excursions. You must go to the grocery store, for instance. In that case, you set the time for early morning, wearing sensible old clothing that won't arouse suspicions of wealth. Your car should be a modest type that won't tempt thieves. You will bring one blank check, unsigned, in a front pocket instead of carrying a purse that can be snatched. Before setting out, call one neighbor in every direction. Tell them you have no intention of moving and if

© 1983 by Clements Jordan.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they see a moving van near your house they should call the police at once.

All right, you're of a sociable disposition and would enjoy a little chat with your friendly neighborhood grocer. Watch it. For instance, just suppose you feel like saying, "Lands, a dozen eggs will last me for weeks, living by myself. Will you break this carton in two for me? I don't seem to have much strength in my hands." Do you realize that you will have informed everyone in earshot that you live alone and are too timid to break an egg carton?

It's always wiser to get the whole dozen and large sizes of everything—never mind freezer burn—and to remark brightly, "Goodness, we eat so much at our house, I'll probably be back tomorrow." And if your local grocer is inclined to blow your cover, consider shopping at a big market where the manager is a stranger. Never mind that Mr. Mandel has always held liver scraps for your cat and calls you when he's planning to reduce persimmons and pork chops. Never mind that the supermarket is a few miles farther. Which is more important—a few dollars saved, or your life?

Take your groceries to the car yourself. That accommodating young man by the checkout counter certainly might be on the level when he offers his brawny arms to your aid, but he just *might* force himself into the car with you, poke a pipestem in your ribs, and make you drive him to your house. And then what? He could come in and stay forever, forcing you to support him, turning away your friends and relatives at the door. When you threaten to phone the store and expose him to his employer, he could laugh evilly and say, "My *what?* I never had no employer in my life, lady. And you ain't *got* no phone—now."

When and if you're safely in your car with everything locked, look closely in the mirror. Is there another car following in the same direction? Is it driven by a man or a strong-looking woman? You could be followed home and overpowered. What you must do is detour. Drive around blocks in random directions until you can't see him or her any more.

Say you've arrived safely home alone. You can't relax yet. You must remain in your car, safely locked, until you're sure there's no one lurking about pretending to be reading meters, delivering mail, or waiting to give you a message from someone. If you see a stranger within a block, stay inside the car as long as it takes to be sure he's no threat. Remember, the boy mowing your neighbor's lawn might

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

really be casing your house. What *if* the milk sours? It's surely a small price to pay for your safety.

When you're sure it's safe to leave the car make sure it's secure. If you have a garage, it's a mixed blessing. No matter how satisfied you might be with your lock, there will be some thief who can conquer it. He'll conceal himself there and wait to attack you the minute you leave the car. With or without a garage, you must safeguard your car. Lock the doors and windows. With the price of gas being what it is, you should also have a lock on the gas tank. Do you have four spare tires locked securely away in case your tires are slashed? Do you have an air pump so that you can let the air out of at least two tires every time you leave it? Then if someone succeeds in breaking into your car in the dead of night—they *can* drive without a key, you know—he won't get far, will he?

Now hurry on to the house. Pause at the door and listen! Despite locked doors et al, could someone have gained entrance? Say loudly and cheerfully, "Mae, I'm so glad you finished your karate class early and could come home with me." This will give the intruder the opportunity to jump out a window and save his miserable hide.

Once inside, walk softly. Wear flat crepe-soled shoes that will make it easier to run if you have to. Check the closets, jerking the doors open suddenly. If you see anyone cowering among the coats, etc., be prepared to slam the door quickly and lock it. I assume you have keys to all your closets and keep them handy.

When you're thoroughly satisfied you're alone, *then* lock the door and put on the chain. There have been cases of people locking themselves in with murderers. Don't let that happen to you!

You're likely to be hungry. You've had no lunch and it's high time you did. You've had a safe shopping trip. You haven't been mugged, molested, or robbed en route, and everything at home seems safe. But wait. You ought to count the silver, check your mother's cameo brooch, and glance through your stamp collection. Of course you're tired, but if any of these things are missing, it won't do to let the trail get cold.

No doubt you're tempted to trust your neighbors. That's understandable, but avoid favoritism. Be careful not to visit or entertain one more than the others. Lending anything is risky. Be careful not to tell any secrets whatever. Keep to yourself information concerning where you went to school, former marriages, and the number and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

whereabouts of any children you may have. You'd do well to hide all letters and photographs and resist at all costs repeating cute things your grandchildren say. You never know what information will prove dangerous.

For example, recently your daughter had company to dinner. The guest said, "I don't often have a meal as good as this."

Little Janie piped up, "Neither do we."

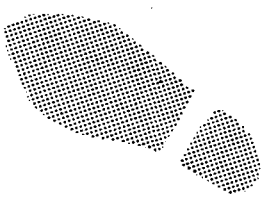
You think that's cute, do you?

I've got news for you. You've exposed the possibility that your daughter is either too lazy or too poor to have good meals often. If she's poor, why? Is her husband's business on the skids? Why has she exerted herself for this meal? Is she a climber? Is the guest her lover? Is he married? Does your neighbor know his wife? Will your neighbor and the guest's wife get together and compare notes? Will there be a scandal? A tragedy?

As for relatives, well, as they say, blood is thick. But it's plenty thin enough to flow. There's more on the subject of relatives than I have time to go into—the whole thing of childhood rivalries, jealousies, hidden spite, contested wills, and property disputes, just to scratch the surface.

How have I come by all this information? What makes me qualified to put you on warning?

I write crime stories.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* short story by

JOE GORES

It has been over seven years since we were privileged to bring you a story by Joe Gores. That was a Dan Kearny story, "File #10: The Maimed and the Halt." In 1969, Mr. Gores won his first two Edgars from the Mystery Writers of America—one for best first novel, A Time of Predators *(Random House), and the other for best short story, "Goodbye, Pops" (EQMM). He is a leading authority on Dashiell Hammett and author of the novel,* Hammett.

"Raptor" has an unusually large cast of characters for a short story and we suggest that you might even want to keep track of them with notes as you read. It sounds tedious but we promise you will find the story anything but. Unless you found The Godfather *tedious . . .*

RAPTOR

by JOE GORES

At eleven P.M., Spiro Gounaris, a hawk-nosed man carrying fifty years and forty extra pounds, locked the door of the secondhand store which fronted his treasury book. He crossed the sidewalk to the phonebooth, as he had done for six nights in a row. As he dropped his dime and tapped out the Federal Prosecutor Task Force number, Raptor came bopping along in shades and a floppy beret—on my way home from an early gig, man.

Unlike the previous nights, Raptor saw no other pedestrians on the street. Gounaris was saying, "Seven-thousand two-hundred and eighty" into the phone when Raptor pressed the muzzle of the short-barreled .357 Magnum against the back of his head and pulled the trigger . . .

© 1983 by Joe Gores.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

At three minutes to midnight, Raptor walked into a gas station three miles away and laid five twenties with a note clipped to them on top of the pump the night man was locking up.

"The pay phone," said Raptor.

The phone was saying, "Hello, this is Dunstan Trevis speaking," as the night man, a kid in his twenties, came up tentatively. Raptor handed him the receiver to hear the rest of the message. At the tone, the kid cleared his throat and read from the note, "Uh—this is Raptor. Uh—I gave the gentleman the message. It—uh—really blew his mind."

Dunstan Trevis was a compact man in his thirties, a shade over five-ten and under 170, with tired dispassionate eyes behind bookish hornrims in a cool, uninvolved face. He switched off the phone machine's playback mechanism and walked through the apartment to his bedroom.

How now! a rat? Dead, for a ducat, dead!

He drew a mental line through *Gounaris, S.* on the list he carried in his head. Five dead rats in the two-plus years he'd been controller for Prince Industries. He felt as he always did when there was a message from Raptor on the machine: ready to throw up, yet determined to go on. No one on the Board knew it, but he'd set Gounaris up so that going to the Feds must have seemed the only way out. And so the Board had ordered the hit.

Trevis undressed and got into bed. Only five years before he'd been a computer software designer for United Electrodata, with a brilliant future, a growing portfolio, some very nice stock options, and a wedding date set.

Then Teresa had died.

Out of that terrible time had come his resolve. He started drinking, methodically, destructively. The folio dwindled, the options lapsed, the future disappeared. Once he was far enough down, he dried out, found a bookkeeping job with the Dahlgren subsidiary of Prince Industries, and in two months was head bookkeeper. He was made controller of Prince Industries when they realized he had a remarkable ability to invent new and startling ways to launder illicit cash.

Now, Trevis slept.

the dum dum smashed through her skull

He came up out of it screaming. Sitting on the edge of the bed, he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wiped the sweat from his face with a corner of the sheet. Always the same, it never varied—except they were more frequent.

He courted sleep, as usual, with Miyamotu Musashi's *Book of Five Rings,* the great Seventeenth Century guide for samurai intent on defeating their enemies in battle. But sleep continued to elude him. It wasn't fear of death—too much of him had died with Teresa for that. It was that he had to change the equation. When you cannot see the enemy's spirit, said Musashi, make a feint attack to discover his resources. He will show his long sword, thinking he sees your spirit.

Risk everything in a feint, in hopes of uncovering whoever had been responsible for Teresa's death.

But meanwhile, sleep. One of his functions was to act as the Board's buffer man. Through him people who didn't want to meet while conducting business didn't have to. Hence, he was the buffer between Raptor and the Board. And between the Board and Letterman, their tame cop who had fingered Gounaris to the Board. Tomorrow he had to meet Letterman, and Letterman would be howling.

Lieutenant Jack Letterman of the city's Organized Crime Squad had a hard, lined face and doleful blue eyes tipped down at the outer corners like a bloodhound's. His suit was not quite expensive enough to raise questions about his income. He entered one of Vince O'Neill's porn parlors past the garish yellow and red sign: HOT STUFF—25¢ ARCADE—FANTASY IN FLESH! Covering the walls were intimate photos of women wearing nothing but expressions seldom seen in full daylight. In a raised change-cage, a stout middle-aged woman reading that morning's *Wall Street Journal* said, "The-hottest-show-in-town-have-a-good-time" without looking up from her stock quotations.

Letterman entered the labyrinth of coin machines where mobile masks of light flickered over the features of the male viewers peering into the eyepieces. Perfumed disinfectant gave it a county-jail smell. In the rear was Trevis, showing no slightest interest in what he was seeing. Letterman fed three quarters, good for three minutes, into the machine next to his.

"I didn't expect a hit on Gounaris," he complained. "The boys down at the federal building are really burned. There's going to be too much heat for me to pass anything on for a while. I've got a pension to protect."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Trevis shrugged almost sullenly, handed him a newspaper with his blood money folded inside, and walked out.

Milton Prince was in his mid-fifties, dynamic, corrupt, kept fit by massages, saunas, and heroic avoidance of the pasta he loved. His name had once carried extra syllables—*rhymes with spaghetti* had been the schoolyard taunt of the predominantly Irish kids at St. Paddy's across the river. The syllables had been dropped just about the time some of those erstwhile youthful taunters had started walking funny, or seen their businesses torched, or watched with a gun at their heads while three or four strangers entertained their wives.

"How was the weekend?" he asked Trevis.

Trevis removed his glasses to ponder the question, as he always did. He finally admitted, "I tried the intermediate run for the first time, Mr. Prince."

Prince chuckled. "You? Skiing! I just can't—"

But the time for small talk was past. The glasses had gone back on. Trevis, sorting through his paper-stuffed briefcase, said, "You'll find Raptor's payment on the Gounaris matter under Write-off Against Depreciation on page six of the printout." He paused. "Our friend downtown tells me the Feds were very upset to lose their star informant before they could get him in front of the grand jury."

Prince's eyes sharpened. "How upset is very?"

"Letterman is trying to back away from us."

"And if the Feds find out he's on the pad?"

"He'll get into bed with them." Then, because Letterman, while venal, was not on his mental list, Trevis added, "I recommend *no action* by the Board at this time, Mr. Prince. It would remove the immediate problem but create a long-term one. The police are very stubborn when one of their own is taken."

Not that Trevis expected Prince to follow his recommendation. Prince would do exactly as he wished. Prince was answerable only to the Board, locally.

"Uh—this is Raptor," said the cassette player on Prince's desk. "Uh—I gave the gentleman the message. It—uh—really blew his mind."

"I got it off Trevis's answering machine yesterday," said Eddie Ucelli. He was a skull-crusher who had worked his way up from union strongarm to made-man to a member of the Board.

"My friend at the police lab voice-printed it," said Otto Kreiger,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the firm's corporate counsel and also on the Board. "Another different voice—just like all the others."

"Raptor doesn't make mistakes," said Prince in admiration. "He doesn't give us a handle on him."

Nearly three years earlier, the Board had determined to put out a contract on Christiansen, who was getting too ambitious, but before they could a man named Raptor hit him—for free. A sample of his work. Since then, he had carried out four other impeccable internal eliminations for the Board, but they knew absolutely nothing about him. From the first he had insisted on a buffer man and a series of mail cut-outs beyond the buffer. The Board had chosen Trevis as buffer man, and it seemed a safe arrangement. But they still kept trying to find out about Raptor, just for insurance.

Ucelli tossed a newspaper clipping on the desk. "I thought I'd snoop Trevis's desk while I was there, and I found this. Maybe it don't mean nothing, it's five or six years old, but she used to work for the Dahlgren subsidiary—"

A woman named Teresa Bianca had been shot and killed instantly in a downtown bar by an unknown assailant who escaped into the Christmas-shopper crowds. One of the dozen listed witnesses was a Dunstan Trevis.

"I remember the case," said Kreiger. "A very professional-seeming hit. But the Board never ordered—"

Prince was nodding. "Not one of ours." He shrugged and crumpled up the clipping, tossing it into the wastebasket.

But after the other two had gone, Prince recovered it and smoothed it out on his desk blotter. His shirt was suddenly stuck to his back. Teresa Bianca, Whittington's secretary and a snoopy little broad. No, the Board hadn't ordered the hit on her. It hadn't ordered the hit on Whittington either, but he'd been lucky because everyone bought that as an accident, pure and simple.

Put Driscoll on Trevis, that was it. Driscoll was a small-time private eye owned by Prince. Nothing would get back to the Board from Driscoll, but Driscoll could find out if there was anything to worry about with Trevis. Meanwhile, just for his own peace of mind, he wanted to find a way around Trevis to Raptor, direct, without anyone else on the Board knowing about it. To do that he would have to call a Board on Letterman.

It was a full Board, very formal and full of all that man-of-respect drool they had picked up from *The Godfather*. Held in the executive

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

boardroom, because who wanted to meet in a drafty warehouse or upstairs over a pizza joint when this was comfortable and secure? Prince, as capo, presided. Around the table were the men who controlled shylocking, porn, whores, drugs, garbage, linen, jukeboxes, trucking, and gambling in the city and the southern half of the state.

"Mr. Ucelli is recommending a contract be let on Lieutenant Letterman," said Prince. "Our buffer man, Mr. Trevis, opposes such action at this time."

Trevis, not being a member of the Board, was not present, of course, but his view had its adherents. Gideon Abramson, loan shark and a grandfather eight times over, said, "There is a great deal of heat over this Gounaris thing. The Feds have so many people on the street my collectors keep tripping over them. To hit an Organized Crime Squad cop at this time—"

"He talks, he can hurt us bad," objected Spignola, garbage and linen.

"Who? Who can he take down?" Friedman's street-drug sales were being curtailed by the federal heat. "The buffer man? Trevis? Big deal. Mr. Nobody, am I not right?"

Prince, who was worried by the possibility that he wasn't right, waited while Kreiger made the point that Raptor might not want to hit someone outside the organization itself, then said smoothly, "I believe it should be put to a vote. All those in favor so indicate." And he raised his own hand.

Following the Board's directive, Dunstan Trevis typed *Mr. Porter Edwards, Edwards Tow Truck and Wrecking Service, 4853 Harbor Drive* on a six-by-nine manila clasp envelope with first-class postage already affixed. In this he put a small sealed unaddressed white envelope containing a three-by-five index card on which he had typed:

Jack Letterman
accident

As always, he was using one of the public typewriters in the third-floor stacks of the public library. As he stood up, a young woman with an armload of books ran into him. Her books flew in every direction. She seemed to be in her early twenties and wore no bra under her see-through blouse.

"I'm really sorry," she said in a flustered voice, retrieving his fallen envelope as he picked up her books.

He assured her it was all right and departed to mail the envelope.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The girl, who was actually a woman in her thirties, dumped her books on the floor and dictated the Porter Edwards address into her micro-mini cassette recorder before she forgot any of it. That night, well after dark, her employer Larry Driscoll delivered the cassette to Milton Prince.

Jack Letterman was two-fingering a report while trying to remember if counselor—as in attorney—had one "l" or two when the phone rang. Picking up and barking, "Crime Squad, Letterman," he heard the high-pitched, high-speed delivery of Burkie, one of his snitches, which could be stemmed only by interruptions.

"This one'll cost you, sweetheart, it's hot, in writing. You can use it to cool out the Feds if they come down on you—"

"The usual place?"

"Yeah, the door's sticking, you gotta almost kick it—"

"Fifteen minutes."

Letterman checked out a car and drove to Burkie's latest drop, another deserted tenement. Burkie was just a voice on the phone who had started selling Letterman information about a year and a half before. For the first few times Letterman had gone into the condemned buildings in a rush, with his piece drawn, but there was never anything except envelopes of incredibly good intelligence for which he left envelopes of cash and which he peddled to the Feds and the wise guys with even-handed impartiality.

Letterman huffed up the narrow exterior back stairs to the third-floor landing, where he rammed the sticking door with his shoulder when it refused to open.

Tiny flames spurted from the kitchen matchheads stuck between the edge of the door and the thin strip of flint paper fixed to the frame. With a whoosh, gas from the ruptured line just inside the door ignited.

The explosion rocked the deserted building. Raptor, wearing a repairman's bulky overalls and a flowing bandido mustache, had to duck back into the ground-floor rear entryway across the alley to avoid being hit by part of Letterman. He was boarding a city bus two blocks away when the first police and fire units arrived on the scene.

I was working late, clearing my desk, and Mr. Whittington left with this man. An hour later he was dead. They're saying it was an

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

accident, but, Dun, I don't believe that. And now I'm afraid there's someone following me . . .

He laughed at her fears.

And he was late for their Christmas-shopping excursion.

Walking into the bar, he saw her welcoming smile, but then the man who'd walked in ahead of him shot her once in the head from a foot away. It was such a heavy caliber the man's arm flew a foot into the air with the recoil.

Someone is following me. I'm frightened. Help me, darling.

He'd actually laughed.

Trevis came awake, hearing the slug enter her brain, feeling it bulge her laughing eyes. He read Musashi. Musashi said: Become the enemy. Musashi said: The enemy, shut up inside his own spirit, is a pheasant. You, becoming him, are a hawk. Consider this deeply, Musashi said.

Prince paced. He absently put down Driscoll's reports, and paced. It was raining; water streamed down the outside of his study windows. Nobody had ever turned up Trevis's connection with the Bianca broad because until Driscoll's sieve job nobody had looked.

Prince built himself a strong drink and paced the sumptuous study while he sipped it. The shape of it all was easy to see, now he had the facts. Six years before, he'd gotten in deep and had had to start skimming—using Whittington, bookkeeper of the Dahlgren subsidiary. But Whittington had gotten scared. If he'd talked, the Board would have canceled Prince's ticket, so Whittington had to go. But then his secretary, Teresa Bianca, got suspicious, so she had to go, too. Afterward, the whole thing seemed to have blown over.

But she must have told things to Trevis before she was hit. So he turned into a drunk just so he could get fired from where he worked and then sober up and get himself hired by the Dahlgren subsidiary. And then, as he was using his brilliance to burrow into the guts of the organization, trying to find out who had ordered the hit, the Board had made him buffer man and had given him Raptor, the ultimate killing machine. He didn't have to dig any more. He just had to start setting up the men who'd been on the Board when she was killed, one after the other, using Raptor as a personal hit man. And he'd just keep on manufacturing evidence and having Board members killed until he reached Milton Prince anyway. By accident.

Only now it wasn't going to happen. Because now Prince could

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reach the killing machine without putting Trevis's finger on the trigger. He sat down to compose his letter to Raptor.

Porter Edwards was a big easygoing black who ran a one-truck tow service from his junk yard on the mud flats near the river. As he tore open the six-by-nine manila envelope to remove the smaller white envelope, he felt not the slightest curiosity about what was inside. He got twelve hundred bucks a year to not be curious. That money had kept the truck running lots of times, and had paid for the birthing of their fourth child. He wrote a name and address on a manila envelope just like the one he had torn open, and posted it.

The sign said CISCO'S TEXAS TACOS. Cisco shoved the small sealed unaddressed white envelope into a new six-by-nine manila and remembered. Three years ago, three-thirty in the morning, the place deserted and the door open to let out the hot grease smell of deep-frying taco shells as he swept up. A man dressed in black, with black gloves, and wearing a Porky Pig halloween mask, had come in and taken a stool. Then he had taken a gun with a silencer screwed onto it out of his pocket. His voice had been distorted by the mask.

"Are you interested in a hundred dollars a month, payable twice yearly?"

Cisco, transfixed by the silenced muzzle, managed to say, "Yes."

"I thought you would be." And Porky Pig had put the gun away.

The squat man tried to kick Tommy Yet in the stomach. Tommy blocked the kick outward with his left forearm, simultaneously countering with a right forward kick which would have ruptured his opponent if Tommy hadn't stopped it two millimeters short.

They dropped their arms and bowed. The students clapped.

Tommy Yet was a slight, compact man who could break bones and mangle flesh, smash bricks with his fists, knock down walls with his feet. He also was a Zen Buddhist who revered all life and dealt, not in violence, but in discipline and control.

Unfortunately, three years before, his daughter Perching Bird—named after one of the stylized movements of the Great Circle—had been born with pyloric stenosis. This narrowing of the stomach, which prevented the ingestion of any food, cost ten thousand dollars to correct surgically. When Tommy couldn't keep up on the loan shark's three-for-two vigorish, men came around to tell him

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

what they were going to do to his wife and child the following week if he didn't pay them.

Tommy cast the Ching, which confirmed that he must kill them upon their return, and then kill himself to wash away the stain of the dishonor. But an hour before they showed up, a man walked in with fifteen thousand dollars in cash for the loan shark. All he asked in return was that Tommy forward to a certain post-office box any mail that might come for him.

Tommy never saw the man again.

He locked up the dojo and went out to the car when his wife honked the horn. He asked her to stop at a mailbox on the way home so he could drop in a six-by-nine manila envelope.

At one fifty-four A.M., Raptor leaned forward and thrust a twenty-dollar bill and a long-shanked brass post-office key to the driver through the plexiglas partition which had on it, *Thank You for Not Smoking in My Cab.* The box to which Tommy Yet had mailed the manila envelope had an automatic forwarding on it to this box. There was a message waiting from Milton Prince.

> Our firm now wishes to deal with you direct, as we are terminating the services of our controller as soon as possible. Your rate of remuneration is doubled, effective immediately.
>
> Please advise acceptance through a classified personal ad in the morning newspaper, to Worried from R.

Prince read it in the newspaper a week later.

> Worried:
> The ski lodge, Saturday night, seven.
> R.

Trevis left the office at one-thirty Saturday afternoon with his usual bulging briefcase and trudged across the deserted acre of blacktop company parking lot to find Mr. Prince waiting in the front seat of his two-year-old Datsun hatchback. Prince was wearing heavy clothes and hiking boots.

"I want to go up to that ski lodge of yours, Dunstan."

Trevis was silent for a few moments. "Well, to tell you the truth, Mr. Prince, it's more a shack than a—"

"I came prepared," said Prince jovially and gestured at the pile of equipment in the back of the Datsun. He dropped his voice and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

leaned closer. "I want to talk to you about something I don't want the rest of the Board to know."

When they reached the snowline, where the sleet of lower elevations turned to large wet flakes that hit the windshield and slid down, Prince was still talking.

"In the last few years five of our top people—*members of the Board*—had to go because they put self-interest ahead of their commitment to the organization. So I need someone at the Board meetings I can trust—someone logical, who understands business practices."

Trevis pulled off onto the shoulder of the road just beyond a flip-down sign which read, CHAINS REQUIRED BEYOND THIS POINT.

"I'm not a made-man," he pointed out.

"There's a way around that. If I can get national approval to expand into the northern half of the state we'll *have* to fill Gounaris's empty seat on the Board. I want you to have that seat, Dunstan."

He sat in the car, soaking up the heater warmth, as Trevis moved around outside fixing the chains through the thickly falling flakes. That notion of expanding, that was actually a hell of a good idea. Maybe after Trevis was eliminated he'd fly down to the Bahamas, get some sun, put out a few cautious feelers with Bruno as to how the national organization would react to such a move.

After Trevis had got back in, bringing icy air with him, Prince listened to the chains thump in their even, hypnotic rhythm, and wondered how Raptor would do it. On this one, he knew, he wanted to watch.

The cabin was a big central room with a couple of little bedrooms partitioned off, and a tiny kitchen in back with a three-burner kerosene stove. Prince wandered around looking at the pictures on the walls with his hands in the pockets of his fancy new down jacket while Trevis got the fire started. The photos were of skiers, hunters, fishermen, and hikers who had used this place and seemed to enjoy it, all grins and rough clothes.

As the iron potbellied wood stove started to take the chill off the room, Trevis pumped up the kerosene pressure lamp until the double mantles glowed white-hot.

"I'll close the shades," said Prince. "They'll help keep the heat in."

He went from window to window, pulling down the cheap roller

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

shades and staring out through the cold glass of each window. It was two minutes to seven.

Are you out there waiting somewhere, Raptor? Are you ready, Raptor?

Raptor checked the luminous face of his watch.

6:59:01 and :02 and :03 . . .

It was time.

Trevis heaved his bulging briefcase up on the table and opened it. "I've got some printouts here, Mr. Prince, that might suggest some avenues for initiating expansion."

Prince stopped him with a wave of the hand. He had an unpleasant smile on his face. "You won't need those, Trevis. I've had a full report on you and Teresa Bianca. I know what you've been doing these past three years." He chuckled. "You've finally found the man you've been looking for."

Trevis slowly let the papers he had started to bring out slide back in the case. His face was very white.

"I used the Letterman hit to bypass you, Trevis. Raptor is going to kill you. Here. Tonight. Right now."

As he spoke, Trevis's eyes shifted beyond him to the door. His eyes widened.

Prince looked at the door, almost feeling the icy blast from outside. The door was still closed. He turned back to see Trevis's right hand come out of the briefcase holding a Walther MPK machine pistol. The muzzle of the Walther, extended by a gas cylinder silencer, was pointed at Prince.

"I couldn't stomach any more random killing, Prince, so I put that newspaper clipping where Ucelli would find it. I hoped it would bring whoever I was after out into the open." He paused. "I'm Raptor."

Prince's face felt suddenly bloodless. His mouth was without saliva. He thrust out his hands, palms forward. "Money . . ."

The silenced sub-machinegun made a series of earnest busy clicking sounds. Blood and bone leaped from the front of Prince's head. Splinters and chips flew from the wall behind him. The gun followed him down, clicking and chattering to itself until the magazine was empty.

Raptor stood for a long moment with the machine pistol hanging straight down at his side.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Trevis returned the gun to the briefcase, shut it, and with his gloved left hand turned the pump on the lantern. There was the hiss of escaping pressure. By the mantles' dying glow, he picked his way across the unfamiliar room he'd rented by phone, in Prince's name, earlier in the week, and had paid for with a cashier's check. He had never been skiing in his life.

Outside, the snow had stopped. Stars crowded the black sky. A nice night for a drive down the mountain. Then he thought: To what? Wasn't he by this time so steeped in blood that—

But then, in a sudden blinding moment of insight, he understood the ultimate truth in Miyamotu Musashi's book which had eluded him until now. The Fifth Ring, said Musashi, was the final strategy. The Fifth Ring was the way of the Void. In the Void was only virtue, without evil.

Raptor was in the Void. Raptor was of the Void.

Two men had died back there in the cabin.

Trevis was now free of both of them.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* short story by

STANLEY ELLIN

Phil went to the kitchen door to take in a view of the noisy soccer game in the back yard. Over the dividing hedge the colonel had once pointedly remarked how scruffy those games made what had once been a fine lawn. A real old sweetheart, the colonel, with all that West Point charm.

A wonderful addition to the EQMM Book of Records—Stanley Ellin's second story in one year! And what a story it is. A story about love, and about horror intruding on the everyday—the very "today" everyday . . .

MRS. MOUSE

by STANLEY ELLIN

The alarm clock had been set for six-thirty. Phil Yost woke three minutes before it was scheduled to sound its chimes, cocked an eye at it, and depressed its Off button. Then he settled back to savor the three minutes he had thus earned. A sunshiny morning, pleasantly cool for a Massachusetts end of August. But before time was up he became aware of mysterious noises filtering through the venetian blinds from the direction of the Chandler house next door.

He crossed the room and spread two slats of a blind to peer through them. The kitchen entrance to the Chandler house was visible from here, and beside it on the driveway was parked a beat-up station wagon with a woman and a child hauling stuff from it. Both were in just-as-beat-up T-shirts and jeans, the woman small and slight, her hair in a braid that fell almost to her waist, the boy at a guess close to Andy's age, Andy Yost having last month celebrated his twelfth birthday. There was no man in sight, no suggestion of any

© 1983 by Stanley Ellin.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

husband or male consort to help in the donkey work of unloading the heavy cartons, luggage, odd-shaped bundles.

Tenants? Phil wondered. For sure they weren't buyers. Judy Phelps, Linstead Township's leading real-estate lady and unofficial town crier, had said that the place was definitely not for sale. On the other hand, this certainly seemed a pair of ragamuffin tenants for a distinguished old house in the swankiest part of town. Mysterious all right, in line with the whole curious performance given by the Chandlers the past few months. The Chandlers were the colonel and his lady—Colonel Henry Chandler, U.S.A. retired, and Mrs. Maud Chandler—a partnership, so the word went, where he had the honors and she had the money, barrelfuls of it.

What they definitely hadn't had was any neighborly feeling, maintaining a chilly distance from all the prosperous young marrieds who had taken over the fine houses in the section, and, from the time Phil Yost and family had moved next door, coming on neighborly only once. That was the evening they had appeared at his door to tender their condolences on his wife's death. Even then they had refused any hospitality, just stood there in the foyer, the square-jawed colonel ramrod stiff, stately Maud murmuring, "How awful. Such a beautiful young woman. What can one say?"

What, indeed? Greta had been beautiful and young and the kind of challenging driver who invited disaster every time she got behind the wheel. It had been all her fault, her piling up the car, and the only thing to mitigate the horror had been her decision not to take Andy along on that shopping trip. Phil was consciously grateful for this several times a day, every day.

Anyhow, the colonel and his lady, who had hitherto lived by a precisely marked calendar—winters in some place they owned in the Sun Belt, summers in some place they rented in the Berkshires—this year had suddenly returned in mid-winter from the Sun Belt only to take off again a few days later, finally to show up once more right after Easter Week and oversee the loading of various furnishings into a small moving van. And that had been the last of them.

No goodbye to anyone, no nothing. Permanently relocating, said Judy Phelps, leaving a lot of their furnishings behind and with a landscaping outfit contracted to tend the grounds. And, Judy had added with some irritation, they had left instructions with her agency that the place was definitely not for sale.

And now, thought Phil, here in the Massachusetts dawn were this

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pair of shabby unknowns apparently taking occupancy. If nothing else, this information had to put him one up on Judy, the know-it-all lady. Last year he had finally come around to dating her—and, in fact, bedding her occasionally—but while she, with two divorces on the books, was making it plain she might be ready for yet another spouse, she was also too much the Greta type with that know-it-all quality, so that settled that.

Phil glanced at the clock and went into action. The breakfast meeting with Ray Hazen was set for eight o'clock in Boston, a half hour away, and since Hazen had said he'd be making the trip from the Coast just for this meeting—which might even be the truth—it would be courteous to show up on time. And when Hazen had said he was now prepared, blank contract in hand, to make a really sweet offer, that was undoubtedly the truth. Hazen-Wheeler was just one of the bigtime high-technology outfits who wanted Phil Yost very badly, but it was Ray Hazen who, by upping the ante with every phone call, had planted in Phil the idea that maybe the time had come to make the move from Silicon Strip, Massachusetts, to Silicon Valley, California, from Northeast Tektronics to Hazen-Wheeler. Goodbye, Route 128. Hello, San Jose.

Although the picture of uprooting Andy, finally over that night-marish time getting used to being motherless—well, that was troublesome. And for sure there'd be no persuading Mrs. Walsh to make the trek west. Mrs. Walsh was the live-in housekeeper provided by a Boston agency after Greta's death. A widow of grandmotherly age, pure Boston Irish, she had soon become the affectionate, tough-minded woman in the house Andy needed. No chance of moving her to the Coast, not when she regarded Linstead Township itself as close to the limits of the known world.

Decisions, decisions, Phil thought, working the electric razor over his jaw. Life had been a lot simpler when they were all Greta's department—what the hell, he himself had been one of her decisions—but, on second thought, the simple life hadn't been all that sweet either.

Before going downstairs he tiptoed into Andy's room to look in on his son. Andy, sound asleep in an uncovered sprawl of arms and legs, was coming to look more and more like Greta, which, of course, was Andy's good luck. And a great kid, too, now, as the nightmare time was receding into the dim past, actually accepting his father as friend and trusted confidant. For which Mrs. Walsh was due all thanks. She had been the one to point out to Phil with acerbity that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

this motherless child needed a lot more in the way of a father than someone who worked at his job crazy hours day and night and came home, it seemed, just to use the facilities.

She had really handed Phil the rough side of that Boston Irish tongue, had, in the end, led him to reorder his priorities and nervously apply himself to the fatherhood role until he found, with some surprise, how gratifying it could be. The turning point was that as Andy came to comprehend his father's job—magic with all that dazzling micro-chip stuff—and as the basement of the house filled up with by-products of the magic, those handcrafted electronic games free of charge to any kids Andy chose to invite home, the boy had developed a mild case of hero-worship for the magician. Impossible to tell how long this might last with a kid approaching his teens, Phil sometimes warned himself, but while it lasted it was the best thing that had ever happened to him. There had certainly never been anything like it with Greta. Far from it.

Downstairs, having a quick orange juice at the kitchen window, he got another look at the couple moving in next door. This time the boy was on the tailgate of the station wagon futilely heaving against a heavily roped carton while the woman stood below hauling at it. Moved by conscience and a touch of the male imperative, Phil went outside and joined the party. "Let me," he said, and before there could be any protest he got a grip on the carton's ropes, dragged it clear of the wagon, and with that dead weight painfully banging his ankles every step of the way he managed it through the open door into the Chandlers' pantry, where he stacked it beside the other bundles there.

When he stepped outside the woman said in briefest explanation, "Books." Then very stiffly, "Thank you."

"No trouble at all," Phil lied. Close up, except for those extraordinarily large gray eyes, there was nothing prepossessing about her. The snub nose and wide mouth were almost clownish, in fact. And the grimy T-shirt and tight jeans plainly revealed a figure that was almost boyish. All in all a little disappointing, even allowing for those eyes. Not, Phil assured himself, that on his first look from upstairs he had developed any fantasies about himself and the girl next door. Besides, this was no girl. Definitely, from the web of fine lines at the corners of the eyes and the look of her, a woman well on his side of thirty. "I'm Phil Yost," he said. "I live right there next door."

"Sarah Chandler," the woman said. She motioned at the boy. "And

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that is Neil." She didn't have to add that Neil was her son. He was a small, pale, shaggy-haired replica of her.

"Pleased to meet you, Neil," Phil said. Chandler? Judy Phelps had once mentioned a Chandler son—the Chandler son—who had long ago left the nest, but there had been no mention of any daughter. Usually, when it came to ice-breaking chitchat with a stranger not in his line of work he was pretty much tongue-tied, but curiosity impelled him to ask the woman, "You're related to the Chandlers?"

"My husband's parents. He died a few months ago. They've given Neil and me this house."

"Oh." He had the sense of having clumsily poked into raw nerves. "I'm very sorry about your husband. Anyhow, if there's something you need in getting settled down, my housekeeper's in all day. Just ask her."

"Thank you." She hesitated. "And there is something, please. There weren't any stores open yet when we came through town, so if you'd have a bottle of milk to spare—"

He fetched her a carton of milk, and in bypassing the station wagon he observed that its license plate was Canadian. British Columbia. Sarah Chandler received the milk gratefully and came up with a handful of change, but Phil waved it aside. "Just let's call it a housewarming gift. Did you drive all the way here from B.C.?"

"Vancouver. Yes. No big deal. Nighttime driving only. And it took almost a week."

Nighttime driving from the Pacific to the Atlantic all on her own, no big deal. Quite a woman, Phil thought as he headed for his garage. A lot tougher than she looked. On the other hand, the same could have been said about Greta, so what did it prove?

The breakfast with Ray Hazen was held at the Ritz-Carlton, and the man, blunt-spoken and with a fanatic light in the eye, came to the point fast. Hazen-Wheeler had done well in the semiconductor trade with logic chips, calculation being a hot item. But this hot item was cooling now, so the company projected a big jump into the future. Memory chips, starting with the 64K RAM's. Not that calculation would be downgraded, simply that information storage would become *numero uno*. All of which was highly confidential, of course.

"The 64K RAM's?" Phil said. "But the Japanese—"

"Right," Hazen cut in. "And how far ahead would you say they are in the memory chip?"

"Oh, eight years. Going on ten."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Right again. But what you will do, with Hazen-Wheeler backing you to the limit, is whittle down that eight years to zero in five years."

"Funny arithmetic," Phil said.

"Not really. You know what I mean."

"Yes. A super-crash program. Five years of it."

"And you've been through that with Northeast, and the idea doesn't make you too happy. But consider the positive. You write your own ticket, you set up the infrastructure, you give us five years, renewable at your request. We guarantee complete financing, and we all wind up happy. Except the Japs."

"Even so, Ray, I'm not too unhappy at Northeast. And I'm a widower with a kid who seems very happy where he is. Twelve years old and with a mind of his own. He happens to be my *numero uno*."

"Granted. And where both of you should be is right there in California. I know the California style takes some heavy kidding from you Easterners, but do I have to tell you there's a fat streak of envy in that?"

"I suppose not. But I still have to think it over, Ray."

"For how long?" Hazen's voice hardened a little. "We're making our move start of next year, so I need a firm date for the yes or no, Phil. Just in case I have to go looking for another Mister Right."

"Well, it'll take me about two months to finish the setup I'm on now. I can give you definite word by, say, November first."

Hazen looked disappointed, then said, "All right, if that's what it takes. Meanwhile, I'd like some idea which way the wind blows."

"It does seem to be toward California, doesn't it?"

Hazen raised his coffee cup. "I'll drink to that," he said.

But the fact was, Phil reflected on his way to the plant, that it would really be Andy's decision to make, just as hitherto all such decisions had been Greta's. That dated a long way back—fifteen years now—to the time when this tall, beautiful Greta Nilsen—she could have been the U. of Minnesota campus queen if her father, a post-office clerk in St. Paul, had had the money to provide the necessary sorority style—attached herself to the socially low-rated, college whiz-kid Phil Yost, much to his own bewildered gratification, and took over his life. Married him, then promptly steered him out of post-grad work into that well paying job with Twin Cities Computer. And later had picked Northeast Tektronics with its top money offer as his base of operations. It had taken a while, but by then it hadn't come as any great shock, to realize that from the day Greta

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had first sized him up as a marital prospect what she had in mind was the big money he could bring in and all the nice things it could buy as soon as it was in her hand—the high-style clothes, the Mercedes, the too-large home in the best neighborhood, the gilt-edged country-club membership, the luxury trips to New York.

For which, patently uninterested in his work though passionately interested in its rewards, she played the devoted wife. Very good at it in company. More and more impatient with it in private. He bored her stiff, that was what it came down to. No line of communication there at all. But was that really all her fault when Andy, growing up, could rouse her ready interest by a tug of the hand?

Come to think of it, he didn't bore Andy. No, he did not. Irritated him sometimes when, usually at Mrs. Walsh's behest, he had to play the heavy father, but in their times together never—well, hardly ever—drew from his son Greta's kind of yawning, itchy response, the signal that she would like to cut this short. He talked to Andy man to man—at least, big man to little man—and, even more important, it seemed, had learned to listen patiently to whatever weird thoughts Andy was moved to air, gathering by way of contact with Andy's friends as well that almost all twelve-year-olds' thoughts are weird.

Anyhow, it meant a solid line of communication with his son. Certainly sufficient, Phil was sure, to have Andy deliver his honest opinion about a California move.

He came home winded after a frustrating day with some wilfully erring microprocessor circuits and found Mrs. Walsh at work preparing dinner while a noisy game of soccer went on in the back yard. Mrs. Walsh waited for him to mix himself a martini on the kitchen sideboard, then, addressing the pot she was stirring, she said, "Had a visitor this afternoon. New lady next door. A Mrs. Chandler."

"Oh?" said Phil.

"Brought a carton of milk to make up for what you gave her. Nice little thing, too. Got her to have a cup of tea while that little boy went out to play with Andy and his roughnecks. Neil. She tell you about her husband passing away?"

"Yes."

"Terrible thing, a young fellow like that. So that's what the colonel and his missus was up to with all that coming and going. Making arrangements and such. They're settled down in Arizona now for good, she says. Gave her this house here and they get the boy every summer and for Christmas and Easter and such. A lot better having

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

her next door than them, I'll say that much. Freeze you out, their kind of people."

So they did, Phil thought. He went to the kitchen door to take in a view of the soccer game. Over the dividing hedge, the colonel had pointedly remarked how scruffy those games made what had once been a fine lawn. A real old sweetheart, the colonel, with all that West Point charm.

Phil said to Mrs. Walsh, "I don't see the kid out there. That Neil."

"Oh, he just played a little while, then went home with his mama. They're Canadian, did you know that? And while you're there you can tell that gang to go home and for Andy to come in and wash up. It's only ten minutes to supper."

Phil dutifully obliged, and as his scabby-kneed son passed by with a cheerful flip of the hand and a "Hi, Dad," he had the feeling that if Hazen's offer was explained to Andy right now, California would probably get voted down. A kid's decisions were based on the immediate, not the long view. So in fairness to all concerned, including Andy, the California style had to get some build-up. Some casual talk about it along the way.

As it turned out at the dinner table, there is no overestimating the twelve-year-old's capacity to see through adult guile. Phil brought up the subject of California, the Golden State, and after a little of this Andy said to him abruptly, "Are we moving out there?"

It took Phil a moment to right himself. "Suppose I said there's a chance we might?"

"Near Disneyland?"

"Not too far away, I guess."

"Well, all right," said Andy.

Go figure kids. "It's not happening tomorrow," Phil warned. "I'll let you know in plenty of time if and when it does."

"All right," said Andy. "Say, you know that Mrs. Chandler who moved in next door?"

"Yes."

"Well, her kid is really nothing."

The significance of this became clear a couple of days later. The new neighbors remained out of Phil's sight during this interim, but Mrs. Walsh kept him in touch with their goings-ons.

"She's still wearing them widow's weeds, so to speak," confided Mrs. Walsh. "Do I have to tell you of all people how it feels to lose someone? Especially when you're that young?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"There's other young mothers around," Phil pointed out. "Sooner or later she'll be making friends with them."

"Them?" Mrs. Walsh looked scornful. "Nice-looking young widows are not exactly what them ladies look to be friendly with. But," she said with obvious pride of possession, "she is kind of friendly with me. Comes in for a cup of tea. Went shopping with me today for school things for Neil. He's already registered for school when it opens next week. Sad little thing. Like Andy first day I walked in here. You remember?"

"Oh, I remember," said Phil.

The following day, Mrs. Walsh had a message for him. She waited until Andy was out of earshot before delivering it. "That Mrs. Chandler wants to have a talk with you."

"With me? About what?"

Mrs. Walsh looked knowing. "Not social. It's something she asked me to put to you, but I told her no, ma'am, that is her business. So she said any time after nine tonight when Neil's put to bed. She said don't let it bother you how late. She ain't much of a sleeper anyhow, the way she tells it."

That was likely true. Sarah Chandler must have taken for herself that front bedroom upstairs, the one directly facing his, and no matter how late he turned in, its light glimmered through his window-blinds. He could understand that. For a long time after Greta's death—her absence from the house had been almost palpable—he had gone through those sleepless nights.

At ten o'clock, after successfully defending his household chess championship against his son and seeing him off to the bathtub, he rang the Chandler doorbell, not without trepidation, and Sarah Chandler opened the door so promptly he had the feeling she must have been sitting on the edge of a chair poised for his arrival. She was in blouse and skirt now, the braided length of hair worked into a sort of coronet effect, and as she said primly, "It's kind of you to take the trouble," and led him inside, he saw that those legs in high heels were very shapely indeed. Still, she was a long way out of Judy Phelps's class and light years out of Greta's, as what woman he had ever encountered wasn't?

He had never been inside the house before. When he looked around at the living room—Federal in design and furnishings—Sarah Chandler read his thoughts correctly.

She said, "It is a little bare, isn't it, but they took the really valuable antique pieces with them. The Chandlers, I mean."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I see," Phil said and felt himself freezing up with that same old self-consciousness—that miserable shyness—that had Greta privately despair over his performances in public. Especially her choice of public. And a solo housecall like this—

"Coffee?" said Sarah Chandler. "Or something else?"

"Well," Phil said with relief, "if you could whip up a tall Scotch and water—"

"I'm sorry. No makings for it on hand."

"Beer?" Phil said hopefully.

She shook her head. "I meant juice or soda."

"Coffee'll do fine," Phil said with a somber conviction that it would not.

"Coffee it is," said Sarah Chandler. "And would you mind if we used the kitchen? It's not quite as bare as this."

The kitchen was, in fact, almost fully furnished. Almost, because she brought his coffee to the table in a stoneware cup that suggested the Chandlers had removed their best china as well. She filled a cup for herself and sat down facing him. "This is a dreadful imposition in a way. I mean, involving you in Neil's problem."

"Neil's problem?"

She was taken aback. "Didn't Mrs. Walsh tell you anything about it?"

"Nope."

"Oh. Well, she told me so much about you. About what happened to your wife—I'm so sorry about that."

"It was a long time ago. Three years."

"Even so. And the way it affected Andy. At least, according to Mrs. Walsh. It made me feel you'd be especially understanding about Neil. Since Richard—since his father died, he's been going through the same kind of thing."

"They get over it," Phil said. "Anyhow, most of it. Andy did."

"I know. And he's such a capable and well balanced kid, isn't he? Neil idolizes him. He'd be happy just tagging after him all day. And I can see why Andy would be impatient about it. Two years' difference between children that age is an awful lot. And because it's so necessary for Neil to have someone like that, I thought, well, you might not mind helping out. Explaining it to Andy, that is. So he wouldn't just send Neil away every time he goes over there to play."

Phil said warily, "I could explain it to Andy. I couldn't guarantee results. There seems to be a whole gang of kids on the premises most of the time, and they'd have opinions too."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Of course, but Neil wouldn't have to get into their games. Just be sort of a mascot, if you know what I mean. Just as long as he could be around them. Especially Andy."

"I know what you mean," said Phil. "All right, I'll talk to Andy about it."

"I was sure you'd understand," Sarah Chandler said. "And I'm so very grateful. I mean that."

It was pleasant, the way she said it and the way she looked when she said it. "Meanwhile," Phil heard himself say, "what will you be doing with yourself?" So there it was. Given the precisely right conditions, you didn't have to study the wallpaper and wonder what to say, you just said it.

"Well," said Sarah Chandler, "the main thing is Neil. Getting him through a bad time. Then someday I might go into teaching. I'm a licensed math teacher, but that's British Columbia, of course. I'd have to qualify here."

"You shouldn't have much trouble. You ever deal with computers?"

"Yes." Sarah Chandler smiled, the first time he had seen her smile. "But hardly on your level. Mrs. Walsh told me about your standing at Northeast. And she gave me that electronics magazine with your piece in it about microprocessor-controlled monitors. I'm working my way through it now."

"Make any sense of it?"

"Some. But there are still a lot of questions about their practical application, aren't there?"

It was after midnight, two more cups of coffee later, when with the magazine between them he cleared up the questions. It wasn't easy, because, as he discovered, she had a good scientific mind, an inquiring and challenging mind, that balked at generalities.

At the door she said with some embarrassment, "It's so funny. If you knew how I had to work up the courage to invite you here—"

"If you knew," Phil said, "how I had to work up the courage to push that doorbell."

Before he left for work next morning he woke his son, rubbing a thumb gently up and down a bony ankle, and when Andy had one comprehending eye focused on him, Phil delivered his message. Andy received it with dismay. "But he's just a baby."

"No, he's a ten-year-old whose father died only a few months ago and who now finds himself among total strangers. Get the picture?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I'm not asking you to play big brother, just that you and the gang show him a little kindness. I have a feeling he'd be glad to just fetch and carry if you told him to."

"Mousie," said Andy. "And Mrs. Mouse."

"How's that?"

"Him. And his mother. That's what Mrs. Walsh says they are."

"Well, she shouldn't. As for you, sonny boy, a little kindness, that's the word. Understand?"

"Sure. If that's what you want."

"That is what I want," said Phil.

As he confided to Sarah a few weeks after this, omitting the Mrs. Mouse bit, that little passage with his son had been openers for the most manic-depressive day of his life.

"Starting right there," he remembered, "when it struck me that I might be explaining about Neil but it was Neil's mother I had on the brain. Then all that day, there you were. That was the high. Then logic kept getting in the way, and that made for the lows. I mean, you simply don't talk to an absolute stranger for a couple of hours and then think, my God, no woman ever made me feel like this, she is the one, she is what it's all about, and that settles it. After all, how do you know what she thinks about you?"

"How indeed?" Sarah murmured. Hair down, shoes off, she was seated on his lap, her legs comfortably extended on the sofa. They had long before given up those sessions at the kitchen table in favor of the living-room sofa—two upright chairs and the sofa were all the furniture the living room provided—where they could share a necessary, if frustrating, physical contact. Frustrating, because Sarah always had an ear cocked for any sound from her son in his room overhead. "Anyhow," she said, "you must have suspected that I thought of you very kindly, to say the least."

"Or that you were only being very polite. That's logic. Greta spent considerable time impressing on me how deficient I was in personal magnetism or whatever."

"Her mistake," Sarah said. "But it's good we can talk about it this way. Good for both of us."

True. Because his big breakthrough had come one strange evening when he suddenly found himself telling her about his childhood among four loud, totally extroverted brothers, where he, the middle one, was the inarticulate, dreamy misfit. And then, when Sarah was moved to reach across the table and squeeze his hand sympatheti-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cally, he had really popped his cork and come out with some painful details about his married life hitherto tightly bottled up in him.

Not that Sarah sat through this nodding wide-eyed agreement with him at every turn. She had some trenchant opinions to offer about, as she put it, his role in this Linstead Township version of an Ingmar Bergman film. His occasional failure—she had a feminist streak in her, all right—to recognize the unspoken needs of a bright and capable woman. Phil, without altogether agreeing, took such opinions with good grace. After all, he advised himself wryly, that compulsion of hers for truth-telling was not a compulsion to be scorned.

Her own breakthrough had come soon after this—by then they had made the move to the comforts of the living-room sofa—when he happened to ask about her plans to refurnish the house, or at least these ground-floor rooms, and she, after a long silence, came out with it and announced that there couldn't be any refurnishing because she was, not to mince words, a charity case.

"You're kidding," Phil said. "The market price of just this property—"

"A loan from the Chandlers. And they provide an allowance to go with it. As long as I stay here and prepare Neil to attend Linstead Academy when he's completed elementary school, and then on to Harvard. They're going to finance his education right up to Harvard graduation. First-class all the way."

"Must it be the Academy and Harvard?"

"Richard's schools," Sarah said. "It's obvious, isn't it? Their grandson is taking their son's place in their lives. And I don't have much choice, do I? I could never give Neil what they can."

"And Richard didn't leave you anything?"

"Just some debts that the Chandlers cleared up. He was the kind of extraordinarily idealistic man who never thinks of money."

The way she put it, with no hint of disapproval, depressed Phil. Surprise, surprise, he told himself, he was acutely jealous of the late Richard Chandler, or of his ghost or whatever you wanted to call it. In that case, wisdom dictated that henceforth the subject of Richard best be left off any agenda.

"I shouldn't have brought all this up," Phil said apologetically.

"Oh yes, you should," Sarah assured him. "It's time it was brought up."

Another troubling aspect of their affair, if that's what it could be called, came to weigh on them especially after Phil had taken to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

using their side doors for coming and going, out of regard for the sensibilities of the world close around them. Side doors or not, as Sarah pointed out, their neighbors must have strong, if inaccurate suspicions of what was going on in the Chandler house almost every evening. And that, said Sarah reflectively, had to include Mrs. Walsh, who had lately taken to spicing her conversation with some pretty heavyhanded teasing in that direction. Sort of a road-company Juliet's nurse, so to speak.

In the end, it was Andy Yost who abruptly brought the issue to a head one evening when Phil interrupted him at his homework to ask how Neil was making out as the gang's mascot.

Andy shrugged. "Sometimes he hangs around after school, sometimes he doesn't. We leave it up to him." He frowned at his father. "Say, are you going to marry Mrs. Chandler?"

Phil's stomach lurched. "Well," he said, trying to make it casual, "how does the idea strike you?"

"I don't know. All right, I guess. Anyhow, a lot better than having Mrs. Walsh around jumping on me fifty times a day for nothing."

So there it was. "Which," Phil said to Sarah later that evening after reporting on his son's judgment, "sort of leaves it up to you now, doesn't it?"

She was silent too long. Long and troublesome silences were not unusual for her. "There are problems," she finally said.

"None. We'll use my house, of course, and it has all the room we need. And since I'm already Big Daddy to one kid, another won't rock the boat. And you know I can give Neil everything his grandparents can without your being obligated to them."

Again a silence. But this time Phil said urgently, "No, don't take off by yourself. I'm still here. Keep talking."

"All right, but what about that California offer?"

"We write it off. Unless you want to try California."

"You must know by now," Sarah said, "that what I want is very much what you want."

"Oh? Then mark down two items. First, wedding bells in the very near future. A justice of the peace with his wife at the piano will do fine. Agreed?"

Sarah took a long time to say it, but, to his relief, she finally did say it. "Yes."

"And for the second item, I'd like Neil to sleep over tomorrow night at my place. It's time you and I had some total privacy for a little while. For obvious reasons."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It is. And they are. But I don't know about his being away from home even for one night. He's still very—"

"No problem. I'll fit a cot into Andy's room for the night. It'll work out beautifully."

And, as he knew after their premature honeymoon when he eventually made his way to his own bed near dawn, it had worked out beautifully. If there were ever to be any incompatability between them—he was sure she must share this conviction now—it would certainly not be a sexual incompatability. His last waking thought was an unnerving one, the thought that it had been only sheer luck that had brought them together. And considering the predictable workings of such as the 64K RAM, this kind of celestial dice-throwing was no way to run the universe.

He came home from work that evening to find the dining table set for one and no Andy in sight.

"Didn't want any supper," Mrs. Walsh said. "Got home from school, went up to his room, and there he is. No TV, no phonograph. Just laying there."

"Is he sick?" Phil asked with apprehension.

"No. More like he got into some trouble in school."

Upstairs, Phil found Andy lying on his bed fully clothed. Still against the opposite wall was the folding cot taken from the attic for Neil's use the previous night. Phil sat down on the cot and surveyed his son. No question, the kid was in a state of misery. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing."

"Obviously, a lot more than that. Did something go wrong in school?"

"No. Anyhow, it's a secret. A big one. I don't want to talk about it."

"I think you do. And you know I'm good at keeping secrets."

"Even so. Neil told it to me last night, but nobody else in the world is supposed to know about it."

Andy went into a fetal position, shutting out the world, and out of experience Phil sat back and said nothing more. The minutes went by, and then, predictably, his son came to his feet. He closed the door and stood over Phil. "You swear you won't tell anybody else in the whole world about it?"

Phil held up a hand solemnly. "Yes. I swear it."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"All right then." Andy lowered his voice to a hoarse whisper. "Neil's mother killed his father."

"What?"

"She did. They were hassling and she had a gun and shot him right in the heart and Neil saw the whole thing. And now you can't tell anybody else in the world about it."

Phil found himself momentarily paralyzed, voiceless and immobile. Then he said angrily, "Oh, for God's sake, how long were you two kids watching shoot-'em-up shows on TV last night when you were supposed to be asleep?"

"It wasn't that! Neil was right there. He saw it."

"Did he? Now tell me the truth. Just before he came up with that story were you teasing him, maybe putting him down some way?"

"No," Andy said. Then he said uneasily, "Well, not exactly."

"Not exactly?"

"Well, he kept talking and talking while I was trying to read so I finally told him to quit it because he never said anything worth listening to. And he got mad."

"And then cooked up a nice gruesome story to impress you. And, if you'd only—"

"He said it happened. If you don't believe it, why don't you just ask Mrs. Chandler about it?"

"Matter of fact," Phil said grimly, "I will have to talk to her about it, because Neil can make big trouble for her with this nonsense. And, believe me, you'll only make it worse if you mention a word of it outside this room. Understand?"

He was using that tone intended to make clear that here was where he wanted the line to be drawn. It rarely failed, and judging from Andy's reaction, it didn't fail now.

"I know what you mean," Andy said placatingly, "but will you ask her?"

"Ask is not the word. But I will talk to her about it. Now let's both of us get back on the track and go down for supper."

Ten o'clock was the time he had come to set for his excursions next door, well after Neil's bedtime. He cut it short by half an hour this time, surprising Sarah. "Neil's probably still awake," she warned as she opened the kitchen door to him.

"Then we'll stay in here for a while. Sit down."

She frowned as she seated herself. "Trouble?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He sat down opposite her. "Yes. Weird. And messy. It has to do with Neil."

"Last night?" She looked dismayed. "But I told him that any orders Mrs. Walsh gave him—"

"No problem there at all. But oh God, what these kids can come up with. You see, Andy got Neil pretty riled up with that 'You're only a baby' line, and so to score points—now hold on to your chair—Neil told him that you killed Richard. Shot him. And that he was there to see it. So when I say it's weird and messy—"

The silence hummed in Phil's ears. And that was not astonishment or outrage in those eyes fixed on him but desperate appeal. "My God," he said.

"Please listen to me." That desperate appeal was in her voice too. "I was going to tell you about it. Any day now. You have to believe that."

First, he found, he had to absorb it. He finally managed to say, "Then it really happened?"

"Yes."

"Some kind of accident?"

"No." She shook her head in anguish. "He was beating me. He did that sometimes when he was blind drunk. And this time I believed—I knew—he was so out of control he might kill me. And his gun was right there on the dresser. Right behind me. I took it and shot him. Not accidentally."

Phil struggled for comprehension. "A wife-beater? And you lived with that?"

"You wouldn't understand. It was all so tangled up."

"No, don't start that. Just untangle it for me." He waited. "Now, Sarah."

She clasped her hands on the table, knuckles gleaming bloodless white. She said unsteadily, "After he graduated college here—"

"You mean it goes that far back?"

"Please, please, just listen. After he graduated he was going to be drafted into the Army. That was during the Viet war. But he became a draft-resister. He went to Canada instead. To Toronto first, then all across Canada, organizing American draft-resisters there. I was in college in Vancouver, we had a student group supporting your draft resisters, and that's how we met. We got married a little while later."

"Love at first sight," Phil said.

"You'd have to know him then. Very attractive, very fiery. He

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gave himself completely to the movement. But after the war ended he couldn't seem to find any other purpose in life. He lost every job he tried because all he had left in him was anger and frustration and somehow a sense of betrayal. Nothing that would help him live an ordinary life."

"So he started drinking. And instead of banging his own head against the wall, he banged yours."

"No, he did start drinking too much, but the first time he hit me—well, it could have been my fault. The one thing in the world he hated most was his father because of what happened between them when he said he wouldn't let himself be drafted. So when he got to Canada he would never even let his parents know where he was. But when Neil was born I felt they had to know that, at least, so I wrote them about it without telling Richard. He saw their answer in the mail and it drove him crazy. There was a check too—and we needed money so badly—but he tore it up and then he went out and got staggering drunk. When he came home, that was the first time. I mean, that he hit me."

"But not the last."

"No. Sometimes I had to go to the clinic because of it, it got that bad. I made up stories to tell them each time, but I know they never believed me. You can't imagine how ashamed you feel at times like that."

"What I still can't imagine is why you stayed with him. Out of love?" Jealousy, Phil knew, made it hard to say. He forced himself to say it. "Did you really love him that much?"

Sarah seemed bemused by this. "I'm not sure. I did come to see how Neil adored him and was terrified of him at the same time, so you can live that way. I suppose I was living that way."

"And Neil? He told Andy he saw it happen. The shooting. Did he?"

"Yes." Her eyes dulled. "It was in our bedroom. I didn't know Neil was at the door until after it happened, and I saw him there. But I understood right then what I had done to him. Not so much to Richard or myself, but to him." She said, marveling, "And if you only knew how terrified I always was of that gun."

"Yes, the gun. Why did he have one, someone like that?"

"Because the only job he could get this time was being a security man. And they gave him a gun. Someone like that."

"And there was a trial?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Yes. And an acquittal. Self-defense. I think the only ones who didn't see it that way were the Chandlers."

"They weren't there, were they?"

"Oh, yes. They had to be told about Richard. So I had my lawyer locate them and phone them, and they came. And blamed me for everything that had ever happened to Richard. And then went to court and tried to get custody of Neil until I made them understand I'd just go off someplace where they'd never find him. So they finally offered this arrangement about the house and Neil's education and having him with them vacation times. But what I never dreamed would happen when I agreed to it—"

"Yes?"

"—was the miraculous thing that happened to me. Finding you. Finding what we have together." She drew a long breath. "Is that changed now? Is everything different for us now?"

"Not my feelings for you, no. Never."

She studied his face. "But there is something."

"Yes. There's Andy. What would I be letting him in for? Do I make him a co-conspirator with Neil in a secret that can't possibly be kept? Lay that on him, knowing how cruel other kids can be—other people, too—when it comes out? If we get married—"

"If?"

"Sarah, I'm not saying we can't or won't. I'm just saying that first I have to get a handle on this, think it through, see if it can be made to work."

"But it can," she said intensely. "And kids grow up and go their own way so soon. When that happens I can't see us far apart from each other, thinking what we might have had."

"That, too. It's one of the things I have to work out." He stood up, almost knocking his chair over. "But I need time. Tonight, at least. I'll see you tomorrow morning first thing. Right after the kids have left for school."

"I'll be here," said Sarah.

Outside, he saw the light in Andy's window, so Andy would be up and waiting for him to report, and he certainly wasn't ready for that. Standing in the driveway, trying to organize the kaleidoscope of images in his head—Sarah, Neil, Andy, himself, past, present and future—he realized that he ached from head to foot as if he had just taken a physical beating. The worst of it was a dull hurt in the pit of the stomach, tension compressed into a lump of cold matter.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

His workshop at the plant had always been his refuge when Greta got into one of her moods. He ran the car out of the garage as quietly as he could and headed that way, stopping briefly at the Linstead Inn for a tall double Scotch and water which, he found, provided neither antidote nor inspiration.

The plant at this hour was almost deserted, few cars remaining in the lot when he parked there. He signed in at the desk in the lobby, took the elevator up to the second floor, and walked the length of corridor to the XT room, the experimental test room, his territory.

He turned the lights on full. The room was vast, its floor a tangle of electric cables leading to the variety of machines ranged along three of the walls. With the machines silent like this, the muted humming of the air-conditioner and dehumidifier systems was an insistent presence in the ears.

Phil seated himself in the familiar rump-sprung swivelchair behind the horseshoe-shaped steel desk littered with incomplete circuits, charts, blueprints, and notebooks. He leaned back and closed his eyes, the better to concentrate on that kaleidoscope in his mind.

Faced squarely, the options were simple. Clear cut. Take the plunge or run for cover. Risk the marriage and its consequences because here at last is the woman for you. Or, because your son would be made to risk the consequences too, phone Hazen tomorrow and tell him that father and son, well ahead of schedule, would be on their way to California.

No, not so simple. Not clear cut at all. Agonizing was the word.

The lump in his stomach was now ice-cold and leaden. He opened his eyes despairingly to the machines around him—the wondrous world of the future, at least twenty million dollars' worth of it—waiting there for just a touch on the switch and the necessary input to have them work their magic, to answer any question you could come up with.

Except one.

"Q"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ELLERY QUEEN

ORDER FORM

Send to **ELLERY QUEEN MAGAZINE**
Classified Advertising Department/Suite 1401
380 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017

$1.35 each additional word
Capitalized words add—40¢ per word
SAVE 15% WITH 3 CONSECUTIVE MONTHS SAME COPY ORDER

DEADLINE: Copy and payment must be in by the 5th day of the third preceding month for issue in which ad is to appear.

(PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE)

YOUR NAME _____

FIRM (NAME IN AD) _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ **STATE** _____ **ZIP** _____

PHONE: _____ **DATE:** _____

YOUR SIGNATURE _____

____ Words at $1.35 each $.....

____ Capitalized word at .40¢ each _____
Total amount for 1 ad $

15% Savings with 3 Consecutive Months Discount

(a) Multiply one ad total $_____ x 3 = $.....
(b) Multiply total amount on above line by x .85
(c) Total amount for 3 ads $

(Example: One 20 word ad $27.00 x 3 months = $81.00 x .85 = $68.85)

$ _____ is enclosed for _____ insertion(s) in the _____ issue(s) _____ Heading

(FOR ADDITIONAL WORDS ATTACH SEPARATE SHEET)

(1) **$27.00**	(2) **$27.00**	(3) **$27.00**	(4) **$27.00**	(5) **$27.00**
(6) **$27.00**	(7) **$27.00**	(8) **$27.00**	(9) **$27.00**	(10) **$27.00**
(11) **$27.00**	(12) **$27.00**	(13) **$27.00**	(14) **$27.00**	(15) **$27.00**
(16) **$27.00**	(17) **$27.00**	(18) **$27.00**	(19) **$27.00**	(20) **$27.00**
(21) **$28.35**	(22) **$29.70**	(23) **$31.05**	(24) **$32.40**	(25) **$33.75**
(26) **$35.10**	(27) **$36.45**	(28) **$37.80**	(29) **$39.15**	(30) **$40.50**

HOW TO COUNT WORDS: Name and address must be included in counting the number of Words in your ad. Each initial or number counts as 1 word: Mark Holly, 380 Lexington Avenue, New York, New York 10017: 7 WORDS. Zip codes are not counted. Phone #: 2 Words. Symbols used as keys are charged for. City or State count as 1 word each: Garden City, New York: 2 words. Abbreviations such as C.O.D., F.O.B., P.O., U.S.A., 7x10, 35mm count as 1 word. (P.O. Box 145 count as 3 words) Webster's International Unabridged Dictionary will be used as our authority for spelling, compound words, hyphens, abbreviations, etc. **Please make checks payable to ELLERY QUEEN MAGAZINE**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CLASSIFIED MARKET

ELLERY QUEEN published 13 times a year. CLASSIFIED AD rate is $1.35 per word — payable in advance — ($27.00 minimum). Capitalized words 40¢ per word additional. To be

ADDITIONAL INCOME

LOTTERIES Worldwide By Mail! Five countries—fourteen states! Complete entry details $1.00 plus stamp: Southwest Winners, Box 2029A, El Cajun, CA 92021

AGENTS WANTED

SINCERE book agents wanted now! Part or full time. Do not confuse with usual worn-out offers. No experience needed. Full details send $1.00 to GTS Enterprises 10-D, P.O. Box 46, Pismo Beach, CA 93449

AVIATION

ANTIGRAVITY PROPULSION DEVICE! Free Brochure. RDA, Box 873, Concord, NC 28025.

BOOKS & PERIODICALS

FREE CATALOGUES, hardbacks, paperbacks. Search Service. Detective Mystery Booksearch, Box 15460, Orlando, Florida 32808.

WORLD's largest mystery specialist (30,000 volumes). No obligation search service. Send $2 for next 4 catalogues. Aardvarks Book Detectives, P.O. Box 15070, Orlando, FL 32858.

MYSTERY Bookstore issues free monthly catalog of new books. The Butler Did It, 10449A Green Mountain, Columbia, MD 21044.

PUBLISH YOUR BOOK! Join our successful authors. Publicity, advertising, beautiful books. All subjects invited. Send for fact-filled booklet and free manuscript report. Carlton Press, Dept. SMV, 84 Fifth Avenue, New York 10011.

SEND 25¢ for Catalogs of Mystery and Detective Fiction. Canford Books, Drawer 216E, Freeville, New York 13036.

AMAZING New booklist on a variety of subjects. Over 3 hundred different subjects. Free listing. Write to: BROWN'S ENTERPRISE, P.O. Box 4229, Philadelphia, PA 19101-2229.

MYSTERY/SUSPENSE catalogues $1. Once Upon A Mystery, P.O. Box 31301-B, San Francisco, Ca 94131. Also will purchase.

BOOKS & PERIODICALS—Cont'd

FREE list! Used hardcover mystery and detective fiction. Over 7500 books listed yearly. Dunn's Mysteries, 251 Baldwin Ave., Meriden, CT 06450.

MYSTERY: Sherlock Holmes, Espionage, Science-Fiction, Reference & Bibliographies. FIRST EDITIONS. PAULETTE GREENE RARE BOOKS, 140 Princeton Road, Rockville Centre, NY 11570. Catalogue $2.00.

60,000 Science Fiction and Mystery Paperbacks, Hardcovers, Magazines. Free Catalogs! Grant Thiessen, Box Z-86A, Neche, ND 58265-0133.

MYSTERY Fans: Brand New Newsletter Only $5.00 Yearly; send SASE for Free Sample. Box 576, Wisconsin Dells, WI 53965.

"EXPOSE HUMAN SHARKS" Stop Trickery! 100 Protections! End Worry, Enjoy Love. Command Conditions! $2 Booklet. Newlife, Box 684-DD, Boulder City, Nevada 89005.

SEARCHING for elusive titles? Try us! 26,000 in stock, SF, Mystery, Other Catalogues available. Cosmic Enterprises, 1200 Hewitt, St. Paul, MN 55104.

NEW Indispensible book for mystery readers. Free Brochure. Sensational Christmas gift, too. Jo Jan, Box 202, Santa Ana, California 92702.

THE SHERLOCK HOLMES CARTOON BOOK by Marc Bilgrey. Funny! 100 pages of cartoons based on the actual Holmes stories! Send $5.95 (includes shipping and postage) to: Cuckoo Bird Press, P.O. Box 501 Ansonia Station, New York, N.Y. 10023.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

FREE Book—"2042 Unique, Proven Enterprises." Fabulous "Little Knowns." How tiny projects made big money! Work home! Haylings-OP, Carlsbad, CA 92008.

MAKE 2 to 3 times your cost on Hundreds of Products. Gift items, novelties, toys, 2500 others. $3.00 brings Giant Catalog, refundable on first order. House of Gifts, 601 West 7th Ave., Lennox, SD 57039

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PLACE CLASSIFIED

included in the next issue please send order and remittance to R. S. Wayner, Classified Ad Director, DAVIS PUBLICATIONS, INC., 380 Lexington Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES—Cont'd

GOURMET POPCORN—48 FLAVORS. Fantastic MONEYMAKING PRODUCTS—lowest prices. FINEST BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES listing. Rush sase: BANIAN Company, Box 12096-DP1, San Diego, CA 92112-3096

STAY HOME! MAKE MONEY ADDRESSING ENVELOPES. VALUABLE GENUINE OFFER. 20¢. Write Lindco, 3636-DA Peterson Ave., Chicago, IL 60559.

$1,000 Weekly Home Business Directory. Free Details. Name and address to: Box 1610-EQ, Darien, Connecticut, 06820-1610.

TAKE PICTURES for profit. Be your own boss. No experience required. Free information. Write: Photomoney, 14589H West 32nd, Golden, CO 80401.

INTEREST Free Money! No Collateral! No Co-Signers! No Credit Checks! Write Now For Free Details! Grants-DPC1083, Box 2298, Sandusky, OH 44870

CLEAN typewriter type face at home. World's best cleaner. Guaranteed. $12.95 for 10 sheets. Mac's, 921 Roosevelt Blvd., Ephrata, WA 98823

BECOME SELF-EMPLOYED, no experience necessary. GUARANTEED SUCCESS. No inventory to maintain. START IMMEDIATELY. We fill orders on thousands of WARRANTED items. Receive complete wholesale package, FREE 10 DAY EXAMINATION, $25.00 (Refundable). West Coast Associates Ltd., 13562 Vanowen, Suite 18, Van Nuys, California 91405

BUY IT WHOLESALE

400,000 BARGAINS Below Wholesale! Many Free! Liquidations . . . Closeouts . . . Job Lots . . . Single Samples. Free Details. Worldwide Bargainhunters, Box 730-IO, Holland, MI 49423.

EDUCATION & INSTRUCTION

UNIVERSITY DEGREES BY MAIL. Bachelors, Masters, Ph.D's . . . without attending classes! Inexpensive, fast. Free revealing details. Counseling, Box 389-EQ-10, Tustin California 92680.

GIFTS THAT PLEASE

SHERLOCK HOLMES DEERSTALKER—In many colors and patterns. Philip Marlowe inspired Fedoras, imported caps and more. Gift Certificates available. Write for FREE CATALOGUE. Outside New York call Toll-Free 1-800-HAT-SHOP. WORTH & WORTH, The Complete Hatter, 331 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10017

GOVERNMENT SURPLUS

"GOVERNMENT SURPLUS" JEEPS $30.00! 800,000 Items! Complete information Your Area. Largest OFFICIAL Directory. $3.00 (Guaranteed). SURPLUS (A525), 4620 Wisconsin Northwest, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20016.

HOBBIES & COLLECTIONS

GREAT RADIO PROGRAMS—mystery, adventure, science-fiction. Free list cassettes. Rare Radio, Box 117, Sunland, CA 91040.

HYPNOTISM

FREE Catalog. Hypnotism, Hypnotic cassettes, sleep learning. Become the person you truly want to be. DLMH, Box 487, Anaheim, CA 92805.

FREE ILLUSTRATED Hypnosis Sleep-Learning Tape Catalog. Attain Goals, conquer problems—AMAZING RESULTS! Write ADVANCED SYSTEMS—D14, 13906 Ventura, Sherman Oaks, CA 91423.

IMPORT-EXPORT

FREE!! Giant catalog and four-volume business plan! Money Making Opportunity from thousands of products! Phelpsco, Box 22401-D10, Cleveland, Ohio 44122

INVENTIONS WANTED

EARN Royalties from your invention or new product idea. Nuprodux International, 1377 K St. NW, 141 Washington, D.C. 20005.

LOANS BY MAIL

GET cash grants—from Government. (Never repay.) Also, cash loans available. All ages eligible. Complete information, $2 (refundable). Surplus Funds-DG, 1629 K St., Washington, DC 20006.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Classifed Continued

LOANS BY MAIL—Cont'd

$LOANS$ ON SIGNATURE TO—$100,000! Any purpose. Details Free. ELITE, Box 206-DG, East Rockaway, New York 11518.

BORROW $25,000 "OVERNIGHT." Any purpose. Keep indefinitely! Free Report reveals little-known sources/techniques! Success Research, Box 19739-SX, Indianapolis, IN 46219.

BORROW $30,000 without interest! All eligible. Repay anytime. Free details! Infohouse, 508-EQ, 533 Sutter, San Francisco, CA 94102.

MEMORY IMPROVEMENT

INSTANT MEMORY . . . NEW WAY TO REMEMBER. No memorization. Release your PHOTOGRAPHIC memory. Stop forgetting! FREE information. Institute of Advanced Thinking, 845DP ViaLapaz, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272.

MISCELLANEOUS

SAVE! Fabulous Natural Gems. For Jewelry, Collecting! Gorgeous Amethysts, Tourmalines, Sapphires! Information Free. W. Taylor, Gemcutter, 113-A Martin, Indian Harbor Beach, FL 32937.

OLDTIME radio programs. Suspense drama, science fiction, comedies. Highly enjoyable tapes. Free catalogue. Carl D. Froelich, Route One, New Freedom, Pennsylvania 17349.

100 JOKES YOU NEVER HEARD BEFORE. Surprise your friends. Send $2.00 to: LB Enterprises, 30 East 42nd St., Room 906, NYC, NY 10017

MODELS & MODEL SUPPLIES

ROBOTS! SPACESHIPS! From T.V. and movies. Imported model kits. Unavailable elsewhere. Catalog $1: Cosmic Connection, 426 Moody St., Waltham, MA 02154

MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES

MAKE YOUR CLASSIFIED AD PAY. Get "How to Write A Classified Ad That Pulls." Includes certificate worth $2.00 towards a classified ad. Send $2.25 (includes postage) to R. S. Wayner, Davis Publications, Inc., 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017.

$60.00 per Hundred securing-stuffing envelopes from home. Offer-details: Rush stamped self-addressed envelope. Imperial, P-460, X17410, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33318.

MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES—Cont'd

MILLION Quality Color Films—Cartridges, Rolls, Disks—to be distributed nationwide absolutely free as part of massive promotional campaign. Distributors needed. Excellent remuneration and prizes. Chance of dealership. For details and request forms, send $10.00: Computron, Box 917, New Haven, CT 06504

$750 WEEKLY POSSIBLE Mailing Circulars! Easy Guaranteed Income! No Experience Needed. Start Immediately! Free Details: PUBLICATIONS, Box 2096-D, Niagara Falls, NY 14301

GOOD MONEY! Weekly! Processing Mail! Free Supplies, Postage! Information? Rush stamped envelope! Foodmaster-DC3, Burnt Hills, NY 12027.

BORROW By MAIL! Signature Loans, No Collateral! Many More Unique Services Available. Write! Free Details! MBG-DPC1083, Box 2298, Sandusky, OH 44870-7298.

NEED CAPITAL? Join our Home Mailers Program. $1000 per week potential. Send SASE to: Mother-Lode, 15½ Nelmar Ave., St. Augustine, FL 32084.

"EARN THOUSANDS"! GUARANTEED PROCESSING STAMPED ENVELOPES! SPECTACULAR HOME PROFITS! START IMMEDIATELY! FREE SUPPLIES! FREE DETAILS! WRITE: MJG-DPG, AMBLER, PA 19002.

$300 WEEKLY SPARE TIME—Mailing Salesletters. Start immediately. Free details. Mailworld, Box 805D, Pineville, N.C. 28134.

"GUARANTEED weekly income mailing circulars. Unlimited free supplies. Send 25¢ and stamped envelope: J. J. Harris, Dept. T, P.O. Box 2521 Gaithersburg, MD 20879"

IT'S possible to spend over $1100.00 to find a few profitable money making offers, I know I did. I make thousands monthly after finding the right offers. I have hundreds of worthless offers. Don't make the same mistake I did. I will send you 8 ways to make thousands monthly. Send $5.00 plus 4-20¢ stamps or $1.00 to cover postage—WIMM, P.O. Box 491, Monroe, Wis. 53566

COULD you use $50.00? Will show you how. Write now for free information. William Stack, 162 Front Street, Scituate, MA 02066

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Classifed Continued

MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES—Cont'd

BOOK SALES AGENTS WANTED!! Your chance to make big money fast!! Sell How to Make Money Books by Mail. Start now part time or full time. As your Key Source—I'll supply you with everything you need to operate your own business. Millions of potential buyers. Let's make money together. For full details send $1.00 to: D & J ENTERPRISES, P.O. BOX 54648-Z, WASHINGTON, DC 20032

GUARANTEED weekly income! Easy program mailing our circulars. Free supplies. Experience unnecessary. Start immediately. Write: Bond, Box 1147, Melbourne, FL 32901

MUSIC & MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

SING for Health, Happiness, Prosperity. Five Easy Steps $20.00. One + One Entity, P.O. Box 102, Clairton, PA 15025.

PERSONAL

SINGLE? Meet that special person—anywhere! Very low fees. DATELINE, 316 Fifth Ave., New York 10001, (212) 889-3230 or (312) 523-2100 or (213) 854-0640.

FREE CATALOG! Credit, Divorce, Privacy, Tax, Employment problems? Our Books have solutions. Write: Eden, 11623 Slater, Box 8410-A, Fountain Valley, CA 92708.

SINGLE? Widowed? Divorced? Nationwide introductions! Hundreds of sincere members! All Ages! Free information! Write: Identity, Box 315-DT, Royal Oak, Michigan 48068.

UNIVERSITY DEGREES BY MAIL. Bachelors, Masters, Ph.D.'s . . . without attending classes! Inexpensive, fast. Free revealing details. Counseling, Box 389-DP10, Tustin, California 92680.

SCANDINAVIAN Ladies, 18-68, sincere, seek correspondence, friendship, marriage. Details: Scannaclub, Dept. C03, POB 4, Pittsford, NY 14534. (Please enclose stamp).

ORIENTAL ladies. Faithful, traditional, affectionate. Thousands seeking marriage, now! Cherry Blossoms, Box 1021DA, Honokaa, Hawaii 86727.

BECOME ORDAINED Minister legally. Free "Reverend" credentials. Non-Denominational church charters available. Church of God Within, Box 398475-A, Miami, Florida 33119.

PERSONAL—Cont'd

(PARA) PSI ENCOUNTERS. Meet others interested in ESP, Mysticism, Spiritualism, Astrology and related areas. Send Self-addressed Stamped Envelope to P.O. Box 228, Brockport, NY 14420.

CONFIDENTIAL, prompt, personal advice. Almost any subject. Pay what you think it's worth. More information? Send SASE. Ed's Ear, Advice Line, P.O. Box 8086, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601.

IMPRESS YOUR BOSS. SIX WAYS to improve and advance yourself. Send $1.50 to: JTG, P.O. Box 1935, Santa Ana, CA 92702.

MEN! Friendly, fun-loving, pretty girls want to meet YOU. Details free! Merit Enterprises, Box 74758-DD, Los Angeles, CA 90004.

RADIO & TELEVISION

CABLE TV DESCRAMBLERS and CONVERTERS. PLANS and PARTS. Build or Buy. For information send $2.00. C&D Electronics, P.O. Box 21, Jenison, MI 49428.

RECORDS, TAPES & SOUND EQUIPMENT

FREE Promotional albums, concert tickets, stereos, etc. Information: Barry Publications, 477 82nd Street, Brooklyn, NY 11209.

SALESMEN-DISTRIBUTORS

SALES AGENTS WANTED. I NEED HELP. Sell how to make money books by mail. I'll supply everything you need. IT'S EASY. Details free. P.O. Box 370, Roanoke, IN 46783.

STAMP COLLECTING

25 WORLDWIDE STAMPS 25¢ when requesting approvals. Pay for what you keep, return remainder. Hixson Enterprises, Dept E, Box 2089, Satellite Beach, FL 32937.

SONGWRITERS

POEMS WANTED. Songs recorded and published. Radio-TV promotions. Broadway Music Productions, Box 7438-DA, Sarasota, FL 33578.

UNUSUAL BOOKS

THE INTELLIGENCE LIBRARY: Many unique books & official manuals on RESTRICTED subjects—Bugging, Wiretapping, Locksmithing, Covert Investigation, & MUCH MORE. Free brochures, MENTOR, DP, 135-53 No. Blvd., Flushing, N.Y. 11354.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

GET 12 BEST-SELLING MYSTERIES FOR $1.

GET $137.50 WORTH OF MACDONALD, CHARTERIS, JOHNSTON AND 9 OTHER GREAT WRITERS FOR $1.

As a new member of The Detective Book Club, you'll make your first big killing on our introductory offer: 12 of the best recently-published mysteries for $1.

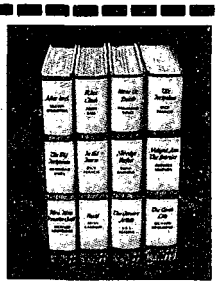
You'll savor baffling murder cases, international intrigue, innocent people caught in a web of evil, terror touched by the supernatural. All served up with the intricate plotting, bizarre twists and gripping action that are the hallmarks of the great modern masters.

Bought in a bookstore, they'd cost $137.50. But as a new member of The Detective Book Club, you get all 12 tales shown for only $1...in four handsome, hardbound, triple-volumes.

As a member, you'll get the Club's free monthly Preview, which describes in advance each month's selections. They're chosen by the Club's editors, who select the best from more than 400 mysteries published each year. You may reject any volume before or after receiving it, within 21 days; there's no minimum number of books you must buy. And you may cancel your membership at any time.

When you accept a club selection, you get three complete, full-length detective novels in one hardcover triple-volume like the ones shown on this page for only $7.95. That's $2.65 per mystery—at least $7 (and sometimes $8 or $9) less than just one costs in the publishers' original editions.

Recent selections have included new thrillers by top names like those featured here, plus Len Deighton, Dick Francis and many others. Start enjoying the benefits of membership in The Detective Book Club. Send no money now. You'll be billed later for your 12 mysteries. Send the coupon today to: The Detective Book Club, Roslyn, N.Y. 11576.



Please enroll me as a member and send me at once my 4 triple-volumes shown here, containing 12 mysteries. I enclose no money now. I may examine my books for one week, then will either accept all four volumes for the special new member price of only $1 plus shipping, or return them and owe nothing.

As a member, I will receive free the Club's monthly Preview, which describes my next selection. I will always have at least ten days to reject any selection by returning the form provided. I may return any book sent for full credit within 21 days. For each monthly triple-volume I keep, I will send you only $7.95, plus shipping. I understand I may cancel my membership at any time.

3-EY

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB, ROSLYN, N.Y. 11576:

D21M6Q

Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

PUBLISHED BY
WALTER J. BLACK, INC.
ESTABLISHED 1923

Note: Members accepted in U.S.A. and Canada only; offer slightly different in Canada.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DETECTIVERSE

RUNYONESQUE

by MARIE E. TRUITT

A Runyonesque guy, Mugsy Sloane,
Fed arsenic to his doll, Joan.
The rumors, they fly,
But till proved truth or lie,
It's "Moider by poisons unknown."

© 1983 by Marie E. Truitt.

"Q"

ARE YOU GOOD AT READING CLUES?

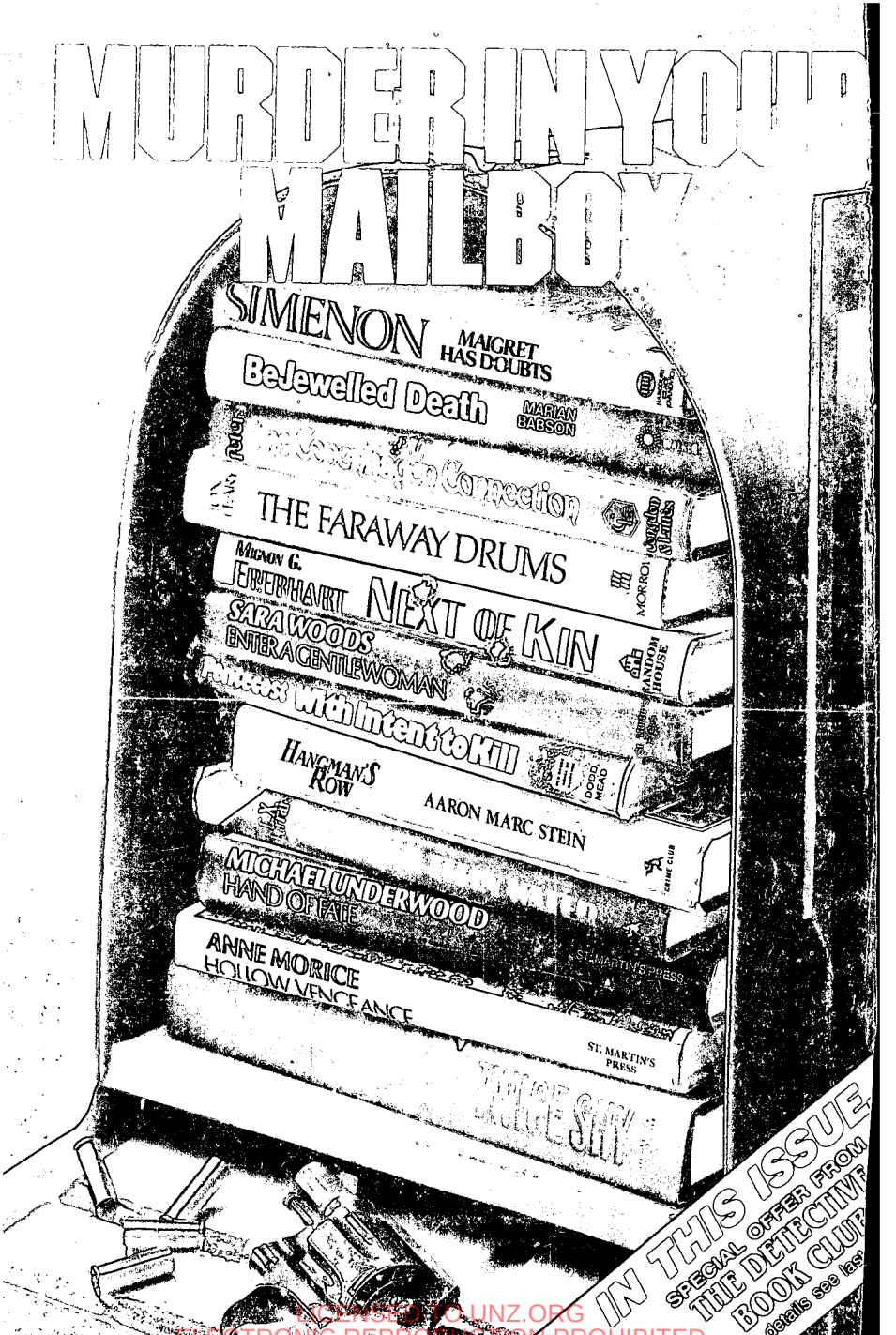
by REGINA M. SESTAK

There's been murder in the attic,
There's been mayhem in the hall,
And the butler's acting frantic
—He gave Scotland Yard a call!

Outside a hound is baying,
There's a bloodstain on the screen!
Has there really been a slaying?
No—it's all in *Ellery Queen*.

© 1983 by Regina M. Sestak.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED